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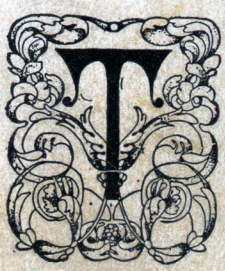

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Dick Merriwell's Dare

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By BURT L. STANDISH

Author of the celebrated stories of the adventures of the Merriwell brothers, published exclusively in paper-covered edition in the NEW MEDAL LIBRARY.

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Dick Merriwell's Dare

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DICK MERRIWELL'S DARE.

CHAPTER I.

A WARNING.

June Arlington sat on the rear seat of the touring car and watched the game between Fairport and Eaton. The game was being played on Eaton Field, and at the beginning of the seventh inning Fairport had a lead of two runs, the score standing nine to seven.

The visitors were using a freshman pitcher by the name of Felix, who had succeeded in holding the heavy-hitting Eatons down in a surprising manner. Still, Eaton was confident of pulling the game out of the fire, and there seemed indications that Felix was weakening.

"I wonder if they'll give Chester a show," murmured June anxiously. "He feels sure Felix can't hold Eaton down, and he's confident he'll be able to save the game if Castle will put him in. Oh, I hope they do try him before it's too late."

June knew all the fine points of baseball, and she noted that the Fairport pitcher was erratic and wild at the opening of this inning.

Having such confidence in his own team and believing Eaton could stagger Fairport at the very outset, the local captain sent his players to bat first. This gave Fairport a chance to finish the game at bat.

June looked around for Chester, and discovered him back of the Fairport bench talking with a utility player of the visiting team. Chet was watching the game

like a hawk. On the way to Eaton he had explained to his sister his reason for coming as a change pitcher. He had stated his belief that Felix would weaken before the game was over.

"Creighton knows he needs me," said Chet. "He's tried to get along without me, but I felt confident he'd have to call on me sooner or later. I made a stiff fight to get control of the nine this spring, but my enemies downed me. All I ask is one or two fair trials in the box. I'll show them what I can do, and they'll have to use me the rest of the season. I'm going to pitch against Fardale. When I make up my mind I'm going to do a thing, I have a way of doing it. I told Creighton squarely that I would not go into the box after the game was hopelessly lost, and he promised to call on me, if he called at all, before such a condition arose. I have a feeling that I'm going to be the chap that wins the game for Fairport today."

Through all vicissitudes, disappointments, and failures, Arlington's self-conceit remained undisturbed. And now he was waiting for the desired opportunity to get into the game.

The wildness of Felix passed the first Eaton batter in the seventh.

June was following the course of events so closely that she failed to see a straight, handsome, blue-eyed boy who approached the car. This boy lifted his cap and spoke to her politely.

"I beg your pardon, miss," he said.

"Oh!" exclaimed June, starting a little and turning to look at him.

He was a stranger. She had never seen him before.

"I beg your pardon," he repeated, "but I believe you are Miss Arlington, aren't you?"

"That's my name," she answered.

"Well, Miss Arlington, I've only recently arrived here, and I'm a total stranger to every one. I wish to speak with your brother at once. It's very important. Will you be good enough to point him out to me?"

Looking toward the field once more, June saw Charlie Creighton make a signal, following which Chester Arlington spoke to the utility player, who picked up a big mitt and tossed a ball to Chet.

"Oh, they're going to put him in!" exclaimed June, her face lighting up. "Creighton has told him to warm up. Something else has happened."

"Yes," said the stranger, "the Fairport pitcher hit the second batter with a pitched ball, and there are now two Eaton runners on the sacks. I understand Fairport holds the lead."

"By two runs," nodded June. "But it's getting dangerous. With two men on bases and no one out, Eaton stands a good show to tie the score in this inning or take the lead. I think they're going to give my brother a chance to pitch. He's warming up over yonder. That is he."

"Then I'll speak with him now," said the blue-eyed boy. "Keep your eyes open, Miss Arlington. Don't let any strangers come around this car. Don't speak to strangers."

"Why, if I'd done that, I'd not spoken to you," smiled June.

But the boy was hurrying away and did not hear her words.

"I wonder who he is," speculated June. "Anyhow, he's a fine-looking fellow and a perfect gentleman."

The stranger crossed back of the catcher and made his way toward Arlington, to whom he spoke. Chester paused a moment and gave him a questioning glance.

"Just a word, Arlington, if you please," said the unknown.

"Can't stop now," returned Chet. "I've got to limber up my wing. I'm going into the game."

"It's very important," persisted the other.

"Can't you wait till after the game?"

"It'll be too late then."

With a gesture of impatience, Chet turned toward the stranger, who drew him aside and began speaking hurriedly in low tones.

"I arrived while the last inning was being played. I don't know any one. By chance I happened to overhear a bit of conversation that should interest you. A rough-looking man and a boy were talking. The man has bet money that Eaton will win. He's confident the Fairport pitcher can't hold out."

"He's right," nodded Chester. "But is this the important thing you have to tell me? Why, I knew it all the time."

"Wait a minute," urged the other. "This man believes you'll be called on to finish the game."

"He's right again."

"He says you mustn't go into the box."

"Oh, does he? Well, he'll see me go in right away."

"But he's going to try to prevent it."

"I'd like to know how!"

"The man has been drinking. He knows your sister. I heard him tell the boy that a diversion must be created that would take you away from the game. They're going to try to run away with your sister."

"What?" gasped Chester. "What's this you're saying? Why, it's a crazy scheme!"

"It's the scheme of a man who has been drinking. But I think your sister is in peril. This man has an idea that by seizing your automobile and carrying off Miss Arlington he'll cause you to leave the field in

pursuit. If you do that, the Fairport pitcher now on the slab will be compelled to finish out the game. That's the scheme. Now, you had better——"

"Oh, blazes!" grated Chet. "Felix has passed another man! The bases are filled! If Creighton wants me, he's got to speak now."

"Arlington," called the voice of the Fairport captain, "come on here!"

"What are you going to do about your sister?" persisted the stranger.

"I've got to pitch," said Chet. "Can't you go round and look after her? Go ahead, that's a good fellow. I can tell you're all right by your looks. Just keep an eye on her, and don't let those scoundrels try that trick. Will you?"

"Sure!" exclaimed the blue-eyed chap, as he turned and hastened to retrace his steps toward June Arlington.

His heart beating high with triumph, Chet, temporarily forgetting the possible peril to his sister, stalked proudly onto the field.

Felix surrendered the ball and started toward the bench, his face crimson with mortification.

"Now, Arlington," said Creighton, "show what you can do. We depend on you to hold these fellows down."

"I told you Felix would weaken," retorted Chet. "He's put us in a bad hole with all the sacks charged. You should have called on me before, Creighton."

"Oh, it's not too late. Let's stop them right here."

The Eaton crowd was making a great uproar, seeming confident that the turning point had come and that their team would win out.

To limber up his arm a little more, Chet whistled a ball over to the first baseman. As he did so, he saw a boy open the side door of the touring car behind

June's back and spring in. He saw a man leap up to the driver's seat, throw on the switch, and press the self-starting device for the motor.

Arlington gave a shout.

The man threw in the clutch, and the auto made a sudden forward spring.

June uttered a cry of alarm, but the boy seized her and attempted to hold his hand over her mouth.

"Clear the way!" roared the man at the steering wheel, and in startled astonishment the crowd fell back, making room for the automobile, which turned toward the highway near at hand.

CHAPTER II.

A RESCUE.

A lithe figure dashed at the moving automobile, made a wonderful, pantherlike spring, went sailing over the back of the machine, and landed fairly on the shoulders of the boy.

It was the stranger.

The astonished crowd saw this blue-eyed chap literally lift the stunned boy and fling him out of the moving car. The startled man at the wheel turned his head to look over his shoulder.

Crack! the fist of the stranger landed on the man's jaw.

Those in the vicinity of the automobile afterward declared that the sound of that blow was like a pistol report. The man's hand fell from the wheel, and he pitched headlong out of the automobile.

Even as the ruffian's fingers released the wheel the blue-eyed stranger grasped it with one hand and held it steady, squirming swiftly over the back of the forward seat.

The machine had nearly reached the open highway, but now the unknown promptly threw out the clutch, closed the throttle, shut off the spark, and applied the brake. The car came to a stop in the middle of the road.

As it did so, a hatless man dashed past, uttering savage curses, and fled down the highway.

Twenty men and boys were after him, but he seemed to have a good start and ran with such speed that he gained at every stride.

"Catch that man!" shouted the boy who had rescued June. "Don't let him get away!"

Arlington, followed by a number of the ball players, now came rushing up to the automobile.

The stranger turned and met Chester with a serene smile.

"Barely in time, old man," he said. "These ruffians moved quicker than I thought they would, and they were at the trick before I could get round to your sister."

"You're a corker!" cried Chet, as he seized the hand of the unknown. "You did that trick beautifully! By Jove, you're a wonder!"

"Thanks," nodded the other. "Please don't embarrass me. I'm naturally very modest and retiring, and I dislike notoriety. Your sister is all right——"

"Thanks to you. June, are you hurt?"

June was pale and trembling, but she answered:

"I think not, Chester. But what does it mean?"

"It means that the crazy ruffian those fellows are pursuing yonder tried to kidnap you."

"He certainly was crazy, or drunk!" burst from Charlie Creighton.

"Or both," nodded the stranger. "I think he was crazed by too much booze. Does any one know him?"

Apparently no one in the crowd had recognized the man.

"Where's the boy?" demanded the rescuer.

Looking around for the lad who had been hurled from the car, they discovered him lying on the ground, with a crowd gathering about him.

"I'm afraid he's badly hurt," said the unknown, springing from the automobile and hurrying toward the spot.

There was a doctor in the crowd, and he made a hasty examination of the boy.

"Knocked senseless," he said. "Bring some water.

He struck on his head. It looks like concussion of the brain."

"It's Hop Wilder," said one of the crowd. "He's just back from a term in the reform school. This ought to give him another year or two there. He's no good, anyhow."

The stranger betrayed considerable anxiety over the condition of the boy until the lad had revived somewhat and the doctor pronounced his injuries as minor, although he remained somewhat dazed and refused to answer questions.

As the boy was carried away, some of the crowd who had pursued the fleeing man came straggling back to the field.

"He has taken to Preston's woods," they announced. "He can run like a deer. If they catch him, they'll do mighty well."

Chester Arlington had turned the automobile and brought it back to its position at the side of the ball field. He did his best, in a way, to soothe June, who finally assured him that she was all right, but asked to again speak with the young stranger who had performed such a nervy and gallant act.

Arlington found the blue-eyed boy endeavoring to get away from a number of admirers who were plying him with questions.

"Here, you," said Chet, as he seized the unknown's arm. "I won't worry about June if you'll just stay with her until we finish this game. She's not such a plain girl, either, and I fancy you'll find her fairly bright and entertaining."

"I shall regard it as an honor to be presented to your sister," said the other.

"Here he is," said Chet, as he led the unknown up to the auto. "This is my sister, Mr.—Mr.—what's

your name? By Jove! that's awkward. I forgot to ask your name."

"My name is Sparkfair."

"Well, Mr. Sparkfair, you're all to the good. Just sit in here with June and get sociable."

Chet flung open the side door of the car and half pushed the blue-eyed boy into the seat at June's side.

"This certainly is a most unexpected pleasure," muttered Sparkfair, "and I consider myself in great luck."

"You are—you are," laughed Chet. "You're in luck to meet a girl like sis, and you're also in luck to have the pleasure of watching me finish this baseball game. Just keep your eyes open, and I'll show you how to take a fall out of a conceited bunch that think themselves the only baseball players in this section. Fairport is out for the championship this year. We're going to trim Eaton to-day and eat up Fardale later on."

Swaggering with a superabundance of confidence, Chet returned to the diamond, leaving Dale Sparkfair and June Arlington together.

CHAPTER III.

A PITCHER'S BATTLE.

The umpire had called "time" when the exciting incidents around the automobile began to take place, and now the game was resumed exactly as it stood, with the bases full and no one out. The situation was one to try the nerve of a less conceited boy than Chester Arlington. At this juncture Chet's confidence in himself was supreme, for he fully believed the time had come when he could demonstrate beyond doubt to his schoolmates that he was far superior to Felix or any other Fairport twirler.

Although Arlington was not aware of it, he was almost precisely the same kind of a pitcher as Felix. For about six innings he was a wizard, and then, as a rule, he weakened. This came through the fact that Chet lacked the real physical and mental stamina for a prolonged and sustained effort. Only in his enmities and his egotism was Chet unvarying and unfaltering. Born to be an athlete, he had never risen to his full development on account of certain harmful vices, such as smoking and drinking. For a time in any contest he performed brilliantly, but the deteriorating effect of the cigarette and the flask invariably made itself felt under protracted strain.

He was now prepared, however, to do a brilliant bit of work in the box, and, having only part of a game to pitch, it was possible that he might carry it through at his best.

Once more Arlington received permission to limber his arm a bit by throwing to first base, and this he did while the players and spectators waited.

"It's no use, Castle!" cried the laughing captain of the Eaton team. "We'll send this chap to the stable, along with the other one. He'll get his bumps in short order."

"Oh, wait and see!" smilingly returned Charlie Castle. "You may have another guess coming to you."

June Arlington seemed to forget her recent peril in her anxiety over her brother. Her gloved hands were clasped, and she watched Chester's every movement.

"Oh, I hope he holds them down!" she breathed. "If he does—if he makes the team—he's promised me he'll give up cigarettes and stick rigidly to training."

Apparently she had quite forgotten the presence of Dale Sparkfair, who laughed softly as he observed:

"That's a good promise to keep if a fellow's going to play baseball. I've had to cut cigarettes myself."

"Oh, I do so want Chester to succeed!" murmured June. "A great deal depends upon it. He's had such bad luck! He's been so unfortunate!"

"As a pitcher?"

"Not so much as a pitcher as in other ways. He's most unfortunate in making enemies. He has many enemies at school. They kept him off the team this spring."

She did not explain that it was really Chet's fault that he had not been taken onto the Fairport nine at the beginning of the season.

"He's going to hand 'em up now," observed Spark, as Arlington toed the slab and prepared for delivery.

The coachers, one on each side of the diamond, opened up barkingly. The base runners started off their sacks, each man with his muscles tense and his senses keenly alert, ready to run on the instant. The batter gripped his "slugger" and settled himself firmly on his feet in the box. Behind the bat the catcher,

protected by mask and bodyguard, crouched frog-like, giving a signal. The majority of the spectators were rooters for the home team, and they began loudly clamoring for a hit that should tie the score.

It was a moment to set the nerves tingling. It was an occasion to arouse any baseball enthusiast who happened to be present.

"There!" breathed June.

Arlington had delivered the first ball.

"One ball!" came from the umpire.

"Too high," murmured Sparkfair regretfully. "Still, he came near pulling that chap. The fellow nearly struck at it."

With the ball again in his hands, Chet settled himself with a determined motion upon his pivot foot. He was deliberate and cool; yet, when he pitched, the umpire roared:

"Ba-a-a-a-ll two!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped June. "That looked good."

"It was a bender," said Dale; "just a trifle too wide."

But Arlington was kicking.

"Give me the corners, Mr. Umpire!" he cried. "I got the outside corner then!"

"Play ball!" commanded the umpire sharply.

Shaking his head resentfully, Chet received the sphere from the catcher, glanced round to locate the base runners, and once more poised himself with his toe on the rubber.

Arlington knew he was a good-looking fellow, and he felt sure others knew it. He knew how to pose, and he did not miss this opportunity to show off his "form" before the spectators. In a group at one side of the field were a number of girls, and Chet's eyes flashed a glance in that direction.

Sparkfair noted all this and mentally commented:

"You'd better forget the girls, old man. Quit playing the actor and get down to business if you want to save this game."

"Two balls! Oh, ho! ho! two balls!" whooped one of the coachers. "He's wild! He can't put 'em over! He'll never do it! Get a lead, fellows! Move up! move up!"

"Poor old fel-ler!" droned the other coacher, in a singsong tone. "He has one foot in the grave-y and the other all but-er."

There was a roar of laughter from the crowd. Somehow this merriment seemed to disconcert Arlington for a moment, and the next ball pitched was so wild that the catcher barely blocked it.

"He's gone! he's gone!" bellowed the coacher back of first base. "It's all off! The balloon is up! Wasn't it a beautiful ascension!"

"See him come dow-un in his little par-a-chute," droned the fellow with the singsong voice. "A para-chute is the only shoot he has that's any good today. His inshoot is rotten."

Sparkfair saw that June Arlington was trembling with agitation, while her cheeks had grown very pale.

"Oh, I never saw Chester pitch like that before!" she palpitated. "What's the matter with him?"

Spark stood up in the car, and his clear voice rang across the field:

"Put it right over the pan, Arlington, old sport! That fellow can't touch the ball! Don't forget you have eight men behind you! Make him hit! make him hit!"

Chester knew the batter would let the next one pass, and this seemed to restore a bit of his temporarily disturbed nerve, for he cut the plate with a straight one.

"St-r-i-ke one!" came from the umpire.

"Now you're doing it, my boy!" rang the bell-like notes of Sparkfair. "Hand him up another! Make him hit! make him hit!"

"Oh, listen to the mocking bir-ud!" droned the sing-song coacher.

Chet lost not a moment when the sphere was returned to him, but, with all the control at his command, he sent another one over the pan.

"St-r-i-ke two!" droned the umpire.

"Good work! good work!" barked Charlie Castle.

"That's the stuff!" roared the first baseman.

"Now you're even with him!" came from the opposite corner of the diamond.

"Steady, Arlington—steady!" called the shortstop. "You can do it again!"

Chester smiled a bit. Turning the ball over and over in his fingers, he procrastinated, with his toe on the plate, deliberately seeking to work on the nerve of the batter, who had now grown anxious.

"He couldn't put three over in concussion to save his neck!" barked the coacher on the line by first. "Take a walk, old man—take a walk!"

The batter was gripping his "slugger," crouching a bit, ready to swing if another straight one came over.

"I'll fool him," thought Chet, shaking his head as the catcher called for a straight ball.

The moment he received a signal for a drop Chet sent the ball in. It was high, and it took the drop a bit too late, coming down behind the batter's shoulders.

"Ba-a-a-a-ll four!" announced the umpire.

The crowd gave a roar as the batter dropped his stick and started for first, while the other men moved up, the man on third coming in to the plate.

In the midst of the uproar Chester was seen remonstrating with the umpire.

"Too bad!" muttered Sparkfair. "He's in a worse hole now. This is tough luck!"

"Do you think that umpire was fair?" asked June, her voice quivering. "Don't you think that was a strike?"

"I should say it dropped a little too late," answered Dale honestly. "It passed the batter level with his chin. But don't get discouraged. There's time enough yet."

"Oh, I'm afraid, I'm afraid!" murmured the girl.

As the uproar subsided somewhat, the coacher near first was heard to cry:

"A moment ago he had one foot in the gravy and the other all butter! Now he has both feet in the soup!"

"He's in the sou-up all ov-er, and we're in clover!" sang the other coacher.

"Here comes our heavy hitter!" cried the Eaton captain. "It's all off now! The jig is up, Fairport!"

The next man to bat was a strapping big fellow, who had a reputation as a hitter. In truth, the situation was a serious one for Chet.

"Don't try to strike him out!" implored Castle. "Let him hit! You've got to take chances, Arlington!"

The batter did hit the very first ball pitched. He smashed it out on a dead line into the hands of the shortstop, who held it and snapped it to third with such promptness that a double play resulted.

Dale Sparkfair uttered a genuine Indian war whoop.

"That'll hold them for a while!" he cried.

"Pin medals on yourself, Arlington!" yapped the coacher near first. "Somebody threw a bunch of horseshoes at you then!"

"One man more, Chet—only one!" came from Castle. "Get him, and we'll hold 'em down!"

Chet's supreme confidence had returned to him in a twinkling. With two men out, things looked decidedly more cheerful from his standpoint.

"Never mind that piece of rabbit's-foot luck," came from the Eaton captain. "We can make four or five more runs now. This pitcher is easier than the other one."

"I'll show you!" muttered Chet to himself.

It happened that he knew the weakness of the next batter, who could not hit a low ball on the inside corner. Getting full command of himself, Chet deliberately put three balls over that corner of the plate, one after another, and the small crowd of Fairport fans broke loose with a yell of joy as the third strike was called and the ball spanked into the catcher's mitt.

"Just fooling with them, that's all," laughed Arlington, as he trotted off the diamond.

CHAPTER IV.

GETTING ACQUAINTED.

His face wreathed in smiles, Chester came straight to the automobile.

"Oh, I'm so glad—so glad!" laughed June, her cheeks rosy with happiness. "But I was dreadfully frightened, Chester."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"There wasn't anything to be frightened about. Of course, I was in a hole after that rotten umpire gave me the short end of it. I had the third strike on the other man, and he should have been out. We're playing against ten men to-day, but we're going to win this game."

"That was a corking catch your shortstop made," observed Sparkfair.

"Oh, pretty good, pretty good," acknowledged Chet; "but he couldn't get out of the way. He had to stop the ball. It came straight at him."

"If he'd dropped it, the score might be tied now."

"If he'd dropped it, I'd felt like kicking him up through his shirt collar," said Chet. "Oh, these Eaton chaps hate to be beaten. They die hard, but this is their day to expire."

"How does the Eaton team compare with other teams hereabouts?" inquired Spark.

"Why, it always used to hold the interscholastic championship at baseball. They've had a strong team here year after year. We're out for the championship this year, and there's only one thing that can possibly keep it away from us."

"What's that?"

"Fardale."

"Then, is the Fardale team stronger than Eaton?"

"Oh, I don't know as it's stronger, but the Fardale captain is a fool for luck. Everything comes his way. You know Fardale won the pennant last season. Of course, that fellow, Merriwell—the captain I just mentioned—took all the credit on his own shoulders. He thinks he's a wiz. I don't like to talk about him. He makes me sick—positively sick!"

"You don't seem to like him," laughed Dale.

"Like him?" snarled Chet. "I should say not! I hate him! He and I are enemies to the finish! The principal reason why I am anxious to make good today is that I may have a chance to pitch against Fardale with Mr. Merriwell in the box for that bunch."

"Don't you consider him rather clever?" inquired Dale innocently.

"Clever!" rasped Chester. "I tell you he's a fool for luck! He was born under a lucky star. Things come his way, whether he deserves them or not. Do you know anything about him?"

"Oh, I've met him."

"Well, I'll guarantee you thought him a mighty fine fellow."

"He did seem that way."

"He always impresses strangers like that. He's a fine fellow to everybody he can use. If he sees a chance to make use of you, he'll fool you into believing him the finest chap alive. When you've had enough experience with him, as I have, you'll find out just what he is. He's a dirty, contemptible——"

"Stop, Chester!" remonstrated June, unable to remain silent longer. "Don't let your feelings run away with you."

He flashed her a look.

"Now, that's the only thing I have against my sister

in all the world," came harshly from his lips. "She seems to think that this Merriwell is all right. You see she attends school at the Lakeside Academy for girls at Fardale, and consequently she's seen too much of Merriwell—far too much. He's one of the kind who fool all the girls into believing they're heroic, self-sacrificing, manly, noble, almost angelic. Why, don't you know, he never smokes, he never drinks, he never swears, he never does anything out of the way. I can't stand a goody-goody. I never did! I never will!"

June was aroused.

"Now, don't try to give Mr. Sparkfair the impression that Dick Merriwell is soft and mushy," she expostulated. "You know well enough, Chester, that there's nothing soft about him. He is manly and square; but he's like other boys, and he acknowledges himself that he sometimes makes mistakes."

Chet threw back his head and laughed.

"That's his method of posing. He tries to lead people to believe that he's tempted to do wrong, but he's such a noble chap that he fights temptation. Bah! Bosh! Rot! Now, there's Rand Blacklock, my friend. He's going to bat now. Look at him. He doesn't drink, and he doesn't smoke, and he doesn't swear. But Rand's on the level, and he says he doesn't do these things because he has no inclination to do them. He doesn't throw out his chest and pretend that he's better than other people."

"Don't compare Rand Blacklock with Dick Merriwell!" remonstrated June. "Merriwell has friends, and you know that you're almost the only friend Blacklock can claim. He is generally disliked."

"Simply because he won't soft soap around other fellows and play the hypocrite."

"Nothing of the sort," asserted the girl stoutly. "He's disagreeable, and cold-blooded, and revengeful.

No one can say Dick Merriwell possesses such qualities. You certainly should know that Dick is not revengeful. If he were——"

She checked herself abruptly, fearing she was saying too much.

Arlington turned and watched Blacklock.

"Hit it out, Rand!" he cried. "We need a few more runs!"

Blacklock responded by nailing the third ball pitched him and lifting it toward the outfield. The ball was captured after a hard run by a fielder. Blacklock had reached first, but he turned back, with a sullen expression of anger on his face, although no words came from his lips.

"By his looks," said Sparkfair, "I should say it would relieve him to swear a little. It strikes me that he's got a whole lot of wrath pent up inside of him just about now."

"That was hard luck," said Chet. "If June wasn't present, I might do a little cussing for Rand."

The next batter secured a single and reached first.

"Come, Arlington—come!" cried Castle. "You're the hitter!"

"I'll have to keep this thing going," said Chet, as he rushed in to the bench and caught up a bat.

The Eaton catcher was a great thrower to bases, and therefore the runner seemed disinclined to take any chances. Nevertheless, Arlington made an insistent signal, and when the ball was pitched he swung at it with a wide sweep, seemed to lose his footing, staggered, and fell directly in front of the catcher.

The runner had scooted for second.

Arlington rose to his feet, forcing the catcher to step aside in order to throw.

As a result the runner succeeded in stealing the base.

The catcher was angry.

"How's that for interference, Mr. Umpire?" he cried. "Did you see this man?"

"Interference?" exclaimed Chet ridiculously. "What's the matter with you? I struck at the ball."

"Did you see him?" persisted the catcher. "He interfered with me!"

The umpire shook his head. Nevertheless, the expression on his face seemed to indicate that he was troubled by doubts.

Dale Sparkfair chuckled softly.

"There are tricks in all trades," he observed. "Your brother did that cleverly, Miss Arlington, but some umpires would not stand for it."

"Do you think he did it purposely?" asked June.

"If I know anything about baseball, he did."

"Was it fair?"

"Well, there's a penalty for such interference. Some players consider it fair to resort to any trick if they can escape detection and the penalty."

The girl looked round at him searchingly.

"But you wouldn't do such a thing in a game?" she questioned.

"Oh, I'm not at all sure of that," acknowledged Spark frankly. "It would depend a great deal on the team I was playing against. By the way, do you think that fellow we were speaking about would do it?"

"Who, Dick Merriwell?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe it, for I've never seen him do anything unfair."

"Then he'll never make a professional ball player," laughed Dale.

"I'm sure he doesn't intend to become a professional. You know his brother, Frank Merriwell, has persistently refused to enter the professional ranks, although

he's been offered all sorts of inducements. He is one man who has remained a straight amateur."

"Yes, I've heard so," nodded Dale. "By Jove!"

This exclamation was caused by Arlington's action in smashing the next ball delivered to him.

The Eaton third baseman made a lunge at the ball, flung himself at full length on the ground, and trapped it with his gloved left hand.

The runner on second had started for third, but he promptly dodged back as the baseman sat up with the ball.

Without rising, the baseman threw to second, and the runner was caught off the sack, being forced to turn again toward third. Immediately the shortstop rushed to cover third, while the catcher came down to back him up and the pitcher ran to second.

In a moment these players had the runner dodging back and forth on the line between them.

Arlington had reached first, and he now proceeded to canter down toward second, watching the efforts of the other runner to avoid the man with the ball.

There was great excitement for a few moments, but suddenly one of the players made a dive at the runner, after a fake pretense at throwing the ball, and tagged him. An instant later the ball was snapped to second, and Arlington was caught on the line leading down from first.

"Bad! bad!" muttered Sparkfair. "That's hard luck!"

"Oh, Chester, Chester, don't let them catch you!" palpitated June.

In short order six of the Eaton players were on the line and keeping Arlington dancing.

"Look out! look out!" cried the Eaton captain. "Keep him near first!"

Twice Chester dodged the man who seemed sure of

tagging him with the ball, but the third time proved fatal, for he was finally touched.

Then he proceeded to kick at the runner who had been caught between second and third.

"Why didn't you play the game?" he cried. "I got off first to give you a show. How do you expect us to win?"

"Oh, Chester is angry now!" murmured June. "I'm sorry, for he loses his judgment when he gets angry."

Once more Sparkfair rose to his feet.

"It's all right, Arlington, old sport!" he cheerfully cried. "You can hold them down alone! You don't need any more runs! You can win this game, my boy!"

Chet heard these words and looked round. The angry look faded from his face beneath such an open expression of confidence, and he showed his fine teeth in a laugh.

"Couldn't help making a growl over such dub playing, Sparkfair," he said.

"Oh, if he always had some one to talk to him like that!" murmured June gratefully. "Why, I believe you have a good influence on him, Mr. Sparkfair."

"I wish you wouldn't call me Mr. Sparkfair," remonstrated the blue-eyed boy. "My name is Dale. Do you mind calling me that?"

"Why, I've only known you such a very short time——"

"It seems as if I'd known you always," he said, in a low tone, again seating himself at her side. "Of course I am aware we met to-day for the first time, but there is something about you that reminds me of an ideal I've dreamed about."

"Oh, that's a nice thing for you to say," faltered the girl, feeling her cheeks begin to burn.

"Nothing of the sort," declared Dale, meeting her

eyes as she glanced at him. "Most fellows have an ideal, but I fancy few find them. You know I'm awfully lucky. I've always been lucky. But I consider it the greatest luck of my career that, instead of proceeding to Fardale with the rest of my team, I decided to drop off here to-day and watch this game. That's how I happened to meet you."

"Oh, you were on your way to Fardale?"

"Yes."

"With a team—a baseball team?"

"Yes."

"What team?"

"The Farnham Hall team, of which I am captain."

"Farnham Hall?" exclaimed June, in great surprise. "Why, that's Frank Merriwell's new School of Athletic Development. Dick has told me all about it. I know Farnham Hall plays at Fardale to-morrow, and I'm going to see that game. Why, isn't this the strangest thing! Oh, I've so many questions to ask you when the game is over! And I'll see you to-morrow in Fardale! Isn't that splendid!"

"It certainly is—for me," nodded Sparkfair.

CHAPTER V.

CONFIDENCE, OR CONCEIT.

Once more Chet entered the box, literally bubbling with self-confidence. He opened up with a snappy delivery, great speed, and sharp curves.

The first batter put up a weak foul fly to the catcher, and was out.

"That's a fine hit!" laughed Arlington, with a touch of mockery and derision in his tone and manner.

The Eaton captain frowned and spoke in a low tone to the next batter.

"Don't try to slug the ball, Fred. Make him put it over and do your best to hit safe when he does. I'd like to take some of the swelling out of Arlington's head. He's all right as long as things are going his way, but get him discouraged and angry, and he'll quit. We've got to get a runner on sacks to worry him. He's altogether too confident and conceited while the sacks are empty."

The second batter used excellent judgment in waiting, and finally forced Chester to put a good one over.

The ball was smashed out on a line.

Quick as a flash Chet snapped out his gloved left hand, and the ball spatted into it.

Arlington held the ball. Not only did he hold it, but the trick was done with a careless air, as if Chet proclaimed it was really no feat at all for him to make such a catch.

"You'll have to keep those out of my reach," he observed, with another laugh.

June was delighted.

"Wasn't that a splendid catch, Mr. Sparkfair!" she exclaimed.

"There you go again," objected Spark. "You forgot I asked you to call me by my first name. Won't you please be kind enough to forget the mister? If you've got to use my family cognomen, just say Sparkfair, the way the rest of the good fellows do. My particular friends call me Spark. I'd like to add you to the list of my particular friends."

June was not a forward girl, but just now she was feeling very happy and satisfied, so she answered:

"All right, Spark. Gracious! that name does seem to fit you, for your performance in handling those ruffians a short time ago indicates that you're a particularly brilliant Spark."

"I'll try to be my brightest if you'll let me spark around you," said Dale boldly.

"As a fire," promptly retorted the girl, "you're not only brilliant, but you seem newly kindled, for you're decidedly fresh."

"Oh, what a headache! what a headache!" sighed Dale, with an expression of mock dolefulness. "That lets me out."

"I hope it doesn't totally extinguish you."

"Well, I'm pretty well smothered. This Spark was suddenly covered by a wet blanket. Never mind, as long as you threw the blanket I'll try to survive, and I'll accept it with more pleasure than I would a royal robe of ermine from the hands of any other person."

"My goodness, how you talk!" laughed June. "I never heard a boy say such things. Have you been reading Bertha M. Clay or Laura Jean Libby? 'Lord Barnsford' uses that sort of language in 'Only a Poor Factory Girl.'"

"Oh, Lord!" murmured Sparkfair. "This is the first time I ever knew I had such a faculty for a high-bred line of conversation. Look at that fellow swing

at that ball! Your brother fooled him with a fancy inshoot that time."

Chester was laughing at the batter, who had nearly thrown himself down when he failed to hit the ball.

"They're all easy, Arlington, old chap!" cried Sparkfair. "You've got this game laid away on ice for your team! Now, wasn't that a nice thing to say?" he inquired, in a low tone, again turning to June.

"If you make such horrible puns, you'll ruin your reputation for a high-bred line of conversation," said the girl. "I can't stand that. It chills me."

"Then I'll have to cut it out before you give me the frozen face. I should hate to get the cold shoulder from you."

"Worse and worse. Now you're making me hot."

"That's retaliation. Some time ago you aroused a flame in me that nothing can extinguish."

Fearing the effect of this declaration, he once more leaped up, loudly crying:

"That's two strikes, Arlington! You've got him easy—dead easy!"

"Oh, they're all easy!" retorted Chet.

But when he pitched the next ball the batter hit it a savage crack and drove it toward the outfield.

Fortunately the center fielder was able to get under the ball and held it.

The expression of dismay which had settled on Chester's face quickly gave way to a look of relief and satisfaction, and he turned from the diamond, trotting over toward Dale and June.

"How are you two getting along?" he inquired. "I hope you're enjoying the game. That last fellow made that long drive by accident. I was trying to force him to put up an infield fly. He happened to hit it fair, but the ball went into the air, and it was all right."

"Spark is a pitcher, you know, Chester," said June.

"Eh? Spark? Oh, you mean Sparkfair? Well, seems to me you *are* getting along over here. And he's a pitcher, you say? Well, now, that's interesting."

"Oh, I make a bluff at pitching," laughed Dale. "I'm going against Fardale to-morrow."

"What? Why Frank Merriwell's Farnham Hall team plays in Fardale to-morrow."

"I'm captain of that team."

Chester almost staggered.

"Cæsar's ghost!" he blurted. "Why didn't you say so before?"

"Didn't have an opportunity."

"How do you happen to be here in Eaton?"

"Heard about the game here and stepped off to see it. The rest of the team kept on to Fardale."

"Well, you must know Frank Merriwell pretty well?"

"Oh, yes."

"Don't know but I expressed an unfavorable opinion about him a while ago, but I'm not going to take it back if I did. I've heard about his athletic school, and it strikes me as a crazy scheme."

"It's probable that Mr. Sparkfair knows more about that school than you do, Chester," observed June. "I don't believe he'll agree with you on that point."

"You're quite right," nodded Dale immediately. "I think Frank Merriwell's school one of the finest institutions in the country. No one but a man like Merriwell, with originality, courage, and deep interest in the welfare of the American youth, would have conceived such a project and carried it into execution."

Chet shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps that's true," he admitted, "but I've heard lots of people say it's a crazy scheme and doomed to

fizzle out in time. Parents are not going to send their sons, at great expense, to such a school."

"Evidently you are not aware that the expense is very small indeed. Mr. Merriwell is bearing the burden himself."

"Oh, well, he can't keep that up. It would take a Carnegie to supply funds indefinitely for such an institution."

"That may be true," acknowledged Dale; "but there are many philanthropic citizens who are interested in the school, and I understand one or two of these gentlemen have pledged themselves to contribute liberally at the end of the first year, in case the school seems worthy and deserving of their support. I know for a fact that already many of the boys in that school have made marvelous improvements in a physical way. There goes your first batter, Arlington. It's going to be a tight finish."

"Oh, that fellow never could hit," said Chester. "We've got the lead, and we'll keep it, all right."

"A lead of one run is mighty uncertain in a game like this."

"Well, this fellow ought to help us out some," declared Chester.

The next batter led off with a clean single, and Arlington hastened onto the coaching line.

"There'll be mourning in Eaton to-morrow!" he cried. "Get away, old man—divorce yourself from that sack! Don't hug it the way you would a pretty girl! Get a start for the next one! Remember that variety is the spice of life! Ho-o-o-o, look out!"

At this warning cry the base runner lunged back to first, the pitcher having thrown over.

"Just twenty minutes too late," laughed Chet. "He couldn't catch you in a thousand years, my boy. Let him throw. His arm is weak now."

The runner caused the pitcher to throw to first several times, and then, when the ball was pitched, he went scooting down to second, urged by Arlington's shouts.

The catcher threw to shut off the runner, but by a beautiful slide the latter reached the sack and was declared safe.

"Why, of course! of course!" whooped Chester exuberantly. "It's a perfect snap! You can purloin third just as easy, old man!"

Nevertheless, the runner did not dare to take another chance, and he remained at second until the pitcher passed the next batter on balls.

"Oh, what pitching! what pitching!" cried Chet, in derision. "It's too easy! It's a shame to take the money! It's like stealing candy from the baby!"

"I never knew Chester to coach that way before," said June. "He usually sits on the bench and lets some one else do the coaching."

"Well, he's working for his own game, and that's proper," came from Dale. "Jingoes! I'd like to be playing myself. I always get anxious when I have to keep still and watch a game."

"Do you love it?"

"It's proper only for a girl to say she loves baseball. If I were a girl, I'd confess that I adore it. How's that?"

"Pretty near the limit."

"We're all to the good, fellows!" Arlington was crying. "We don't need these runs we're going to get, but we'll take 'em just to show you how it's done, Eaton."

Barely had he uttered these words when the next batter drove a ball just inside the line toward third base.

The baseman scooped it up cleanly, whipped his foot

onto the sack for a force-out, and then whistled the ball across the diamond to first, making a handsome double play and retiring Fairport.

"Oh, ho! ho!" roared the captain of the home team. "Where are those runs, Arlington?"

Chester turned toward the disconsolate batter, observing in a contemptuous manner:

"That was a fine hit, old man! You ought to have a leather medal!"

Then he walked onto the diamond to pitch the final inning.

CHAPTER VI.

A CLOSE SHAVE.

Now Chester had his troubles in short order. For years Eaton had maintained the reputation of turning out each season a fighting baseball team that never gave up until the last man was out and the game was ended. It was this fighting spirit that won the championship so many years for the school. It was the same fighting spirit, drilled into the Fardale team by Dick Merriwell, that had enabled Fardale to wrest the laurels from Eaton's brow.

If Chester fancied the game was over, he soon realized his mistake, for the first batter smashed out a two-bagger and took third when the man following him bunted.

It was Chet who secured the bunted ball, and he might have thrown the batter out at first, but, in his anxiety to keep the other runner from advancing to third, he threw the sphere to that base. The runner slid and was declared safe.

"It's a shame to do-o-o-o it!" sang one of the coachers. "And Fairport can't live throu-ou-ou-ough it!"

The other coacher began yapping on the line back of first, while the Eaton boys sent up a fine encouraging cheer for their players.

Once more June was pale and agitated.

"Oh, do you think they'll score?" she asked.

"I hope not," answered Dale; "but, with no one out, they have a pretty good chance to get a run or two."

"It will be dreadful if they do! It will ruin Ches-

ter's prospects. I know what will happen; he'll be terribly angry and discouraged."

"No fellow can expect to win all the time," observed Spark carefully. "We all have to meet defeat at times, and the fellow who finally wins out is the one who can meet it gracefully."

"Chester never could stand defeat. Can't you encourage him some way?"

"I can try," said Dale, again rising to his feet.

Arlington was scowling as he toed the slab.

"You've let them have show enough, old fellow!" cheerfully cried Sparkfair. "They're all blown up, like a bladder! Just prick the bladder and see it explode! Don't mind those fellows on the sacks! It's a shame for them to work so hard for nothing!"

"Oh, say, Old Wisdom in the bub-ble, your pitcher's having lots of trou-ble!" chanted the singing coacher.

"You'd better take that voice and file it, or oil it before you spile it," retorted Dale. "You're talking through your hat, and you don't know where you're at."

At this the coacher took off his cap and made a profound bow in Sparkfair's direction.

"Excuse me, Lord Byron," he drawled. "When did you come to life? You seem to be a real poic."

"Oh, I am!" flung back Dale. "But you've made a mistake in my identity. I'm Robert Burns. Burns was hot stuff."

Eaton was determined now, and promptly on the first ball pitched the runner on first dashed down to second.

The catcher snapped the ball to Chester, who whirled toward second, swinging his arm as if to throw, but continued to swing round until he could snap the sphere over to third.

The runner at third dodged back and gave Chet the laugh.

"It's settled! it's settled!" he cried. "You can't catch any one that way to-day, Arlington!"

June found herself unable to speak. Her hands were clasped, and her mouth dry.

Although the batter had not struck at it, the first ball was declared a strike by the umpire. Chet now worked carefully, and a moment later he caused the batter to put up a little infield fly, which the shortstop easily captured.

"That's some relief," murmured Dale.

Aloud he cried:

"See how easy it is, Arlington! They're all fussed up! They actually think they're going to do something!"

Chester forced a smile, but he could not entirely banish his look of anxiety.

This anxiety increased, as he soon found himself with poor control and unable to surely locate the plate. As a result of his wildness the next man waited and walked to first, filling the sacks.

Again and again the concerted Eaton cheer rolled across the field. The worried Fairport contingent bravely cheered in response, but their voices were drowned in the general uproar.

It was truly a nerve-racking game.

One of Eaton's steadiest players and safest batters now faced Chester.

Arlington did his best to lead this fellow into reaching for the wide ones, and soon three balls were called.

"I believe he's going to force in a run," thought Sparkfair regretfully. "Don't know as I mind on his account, but I'm sorry for his sister."

Chet was compelled to use the straight ball, and put it over.

Knowing the game, the batter refused to strike until two strikes had been called on him.

Chet hesitated, tempted to try another bender, although the catcher was calling for the straight one.

Finally Arlington responded, trying for the inside corner of the plate and using his best speed.

The batter hit the ball.

Chet flung up his left hand, and the ball struck it. It bounded off, but went directly into the hands of the second baseman without dropping to the ground, and the baseman quickly sprang onto the sack, completing a double play, in which Arlington had unwittingly assisted.

There was a hush of astonishment, and then Sparkfair's voice rang out in a wild yell of triumph, for the game was over, and Fairport had won.

CHAPTER VII.

A SURPRISE.

The relief of Arlington was inexpressible, but in a moment he turned and swaggered off the field as if he had won the game wholly through his own playing. He did not even pause to compliment the second baseman, whose promptness and ready wit had saved the visitors from possible defeat.

The Eaton players were disappointed, but they showed their sporting spirit by promptly getting together and giving a cheer for Fairport.

Chester quickly secured his own pet bat from the midst of the others, slipping it into a private bat bag, and trotted down to the automobile where June was waiting, rosy with delight.

"Oh, I was frightened almost to death, Chester!" she exclaimed.

"Frightened?" he laughed. "Why, there wasn't anything to be frightened about."

"It seemed to me that you won by a very lucky play."

"Now, don't talk like that—don't talk to me of luck!" expostulated Chet, forgetting that in almost every instance when defeat came to him he was inclined to lay the blame onto hard luck. "We won because we played to win. At least, I did. I didn't intend for that last batter to get a hit."

"But he came awful near it—awful near it," breathed June.

"Nothing of the sort. The ball didn't go outside the diamond. I came near holding it myself. I'm afraid you don't know as much about the game, June, as you pretend to."

Sparkfair said nothing, but the manner of Arlington in speaking to his sister was decidedly distasteful to Dale.

"Now we'll go to the hotel and have something to eat," said Chester. "I think I can take care of a square meal after this. Don't get out, Sparkfair, old chap. Stay where you are."

"I have to catch a train," said Dale, looking at his watch. "I don't think I have a great deal of time to spare."

"Oh, dash the train!" laughed Chester. "Never mind that!"

"It's the last train to-night."

"You don't have to take the train, my boy. I'll land you in Fardale. I'm going to take sis back there."

"Well, that's very nice of you," said Dale, with a doubtful intonation.

"Come, come, my boy!" cried Chester remonstratingly. "Don't tell me you prefer to travel alone on the choo-choo cars when you can just as well make the trip in this bubble with my sister for company."

"It certainly will be a pleasure for me," bowed Spark; "but I don't like to force myself on any one."

"Force—nothing! Just rest easy, and after we dine and I find out what's become of that ruffian, I'll show you how to lick up the road with a four-cylinder flier."

By this time Arlington was on the driver's seat. He threw on the switch and pressed the pedal of the self-starting device. The motor chugged a few times, and the car gave a start as the clutch was thrown in. Then something happened.

The car stopped.

"What the dickens is the matter?" snapped Chet. "There's some trouble with the spark."

"No trouble with this Spark," laughed Dale.

"I think that battery must be weak," said Arling-

ton. "I didn't know it. I should have started on the low gear. I'll try the other battery, but I'll have to crank the machine now."

The self-starting device was one which could be wound up only through the motion of the car, and therefore it was now useless for the time being.

Chester threw the switch onto the other battery, regulated the spark, lifted his throttle a little, and sprang out, cranking the machine. The motor started promptly enough, and Chet expressed his satisfaction.

"This battery is all right," he said, as he resumed his seat.

Rand Blacklock came hurrying up to the car.

"I'm going to take the train with the rest of the fellows, Arlington," he said. "You know I don't care about going to Fardale."

"That's all right, old man," nodded Chester. "I may stop over in Fardale to see that game to-morrow."

"You'll be called up for absenting yourself without permission."

Chet grinned.

"It won't be the first time," he said. "I think I can stand one or two more absences this term. So long, Rand."

He threw in the clutch, and the machine started.

"I'd just like to know what's become of that thug the crowd chased into the woods," he said. "I'm curious to know who he is. If he isn't caught, I'm going to see if I can't pump that boy. The little ruffian ought to be sent back to the reform school, where he belongs."

Chester sent the machine flying down the road at high speed, regardless of the fact that several horses were frightened and became nearly unmanageable.

"Look out for those horses," entreated June. "Don't cause a runaway, Chester."

"Oh, these jays with their skittish horses make me sick!" he flung back over his shoulder. "They're all down on the autos, and I like to make their fool horses prance."

To a large extent just such fellows as Chester Arlington have aroused prejudice against automobiles. Their inconsideration for others is largely the cause of the feeling entertained by a considerable portion of the public against automobile owners and drivers.

Dale sprang out and assisted June.

"Get a room, sis," directed Chet. "I'm going to take the bubble round to the stable. I'll be up in a few minutes, and I want some place in which I can change my clothes."

"I'll look out for her," promised Sparkfair. "I'll get a room for you."

A tall, lanky countryman appeared on the hotel steps and surveyed the two boys and the girl with curious eyes.

"Say," he drawled, "ain't one of you the feller that had that rumpus with a raskil up to the baseball ground? Ain't this the gal that raskil tried to carry off?"

"Correct, Josh," nodded Arlington. "This is the 'gal,' and yonder is the 'feller' what did the heroic stunt in rescuing her. We're going to crown him with laurels and bays."

"Hey?" grunted the countryman doubtfully. "I don't know nuthin' 'bout them bays, and I don't cal'late they make crowns out of laurels. Don't try any bobberation business with me, young feller. I was going to tell you that the raskil sneaked out of the woods where he was hidin' an' jest come right back into this town as bold as you please. He was hangin' round the railroad station a-lookin' for the train. I suppose somebody recognized him, and in about two

shakes of a black lamb's tail there was a crowd after him, and he was streaking it up the road. He come right straight into the middle of the village here, and Samantha Wiggins, who was buyin' some aigs at Tucker Johnson's store yander, said the man jest rushed into this hotel. Mebbe he did, but, by jucks! we've ransacked this building from top to bottom, and we can't find nuthin' of him. He kinder vanished like a spirrut or a spook. Our deputy was in the crowd what was arter him, and he feels really cut up and put out over failing to nab him."

"I don't wonder," grinned Chet derisively. "It's rather odd a ruffian can hide from a posse of pursuers right here in this little jay town. Your deputy sheriff better get onto himself and pinch that man."

"Pinch him? pinch him? Why, gol-ding it! the deputy sheriff is going to arrest him if he can catch him. It wouldn't be no punishment for a raskil like that jest to pinch him. What be you talkin' 'bout?"

"Zz-z-z-z! and the wind blew through his whiskers," hummed Arlington. "Say, Rube, don't you know the latest punishment for criminals is to pinch 'em? Ha! ha! ha! Well, that's a fact. It's the method used in all the large cities now. This progressive town should wake up and get into the pinching game."

"No, sir! no, siree!" retorted the countryman, wagging his head. "We don't believe in corporate punishment round here. We stick to the good old-fashioned method of sending raskils to jail, by ginger! That's good enough for us. I s'pose they have reg'lar pinchin' machines in them jails in the big cities?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Verdant," replied Chester, with a wink at Dale, "they don't have pinching machines. Instead of that, they employ a large force of officers to do the pinching. You see it gives employment to a

great many men, who seem to enjoy it as a particular diversion."

Then Chet began to hum:

"When the frost is on the pumpkin,
And the fodder is in shock."

The countryman regarded him with a slight show of suspicion and irritation.

"You're a pretty gol-dinged fine singer, ain't ye?" he observed. "You ought to have that voice of yours cultivated. You ought to have it harrered before you harrer other people with it."

Now, Arlington did not like this, and straightaway he retorted:

"You're pretty fresh for anything so green, Mr. Man!"

"Fresh, hey?" grinned the man. "Green, hey? Well, if there's anything round this town that's greener than most of the young fellers that come here to school and that play baseball, I'd jest like to see what it is. They think they're all-fired smart, and they go to pokin' fun at common folks; but, by the jumpin' Joshua! sometimes they git snapped up. Now, I want to inform you that my name ain't Reuben, and it ain't Verdant. Jest because I don't happen to own no nottymobile and go whoopin'-scoopin' round throug'i the country frightenin' hosses and thinkin' I own the whole road jest like a hog, it ain't no sign I lack plain common sense. You put that in your pipe and smoke it, young feller!"

Having delivered himself in this manner, the indignant stranger descended the steps and walked away, paying no heed to Chet's derisive laughter.

"These old jays are amusing when they're not disgusting," observed Arlington. "I like to get one of them on the string."

"You seem to be searching for trouble," laughed Dale.

Leaving June in the little threadbare parlor of the hotel, Spark proceeded to the office and secured a room, the way being shown by the landlord himself.

"What's this about a ruffian being chased in here a while ago?" questioned Spark.

"That's what they say," acknowledged the hotel proprietor; "but I didn't see anything of him, and I don't take any stock in the yarn. He didn't come into this house. He may have dodged through into the stables somewhere; but, anyhow, they failed to catch him. They say he is a desperate critter. Tried to steal an automobile up to the baseball ground and run off with a girl who was in the machine."

"This is the girl," explained Dale.

"Jerushy!" exclaimed the landlord. "You don't say! Well, well, well! Didn't it scare you, miss?"

"It did, somewhat," smilingly acknowledged June, "but you see this young gentleman was at hand, and he promptly spoiled the ruffian's trick."

"Whew!" whistled the hotel man, staring at Dale. "So you're the young feller they told me about. You're the chap that jumped into the automobile and knocked the ruffian out? They tell me you came near breaking that Wilder boy's neck. Well, it wouldn't have been no great loss to Eaton if you had. He's a bad boy, and he'll bring up in State's prison or on the gallows. Mark what I say!"

The door of the room was found to be unlocked, and June entered.

"Will you please tell Chester to come right up as soon as he comes in, Spark?" she requested.

"I'll send him up," nodded Dale. "In the meantime, I'll find a chance to wash up myself and get ready for dinner."

"Supper," corrected the landlord, who was waiting at the door. "We have supper at night here."

"Dinner or supper, it makes no difference to me," laughed Dale, "as long as I get enough to eat. You'll find I have a good, healthy appetite."

He followed the landlord, and June was left alone. She closed the door and removed her auto cap and coat, preparing to wash her face and hands.

Instead of carelessly tossing the coat on the bed or a chair, she decided to hang it in the closet. With it in her hand, she opened the closet door.

A startled cry escaped her lips.

There was a man in the closet!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RUFFIAN.

At a glance, June recognized the man in the closet as the fugitive ruffian.

Her heart leaped into her throat.

The man lifted a hand, but the gesture was not one of threat. Instead of that, it was a pleading movement.

"Please don't call any one!" he entreated. "Please don't raise an outcry! I won't harm you. I never intended to do that. I wouldn't harm a lady for the world."

"But——"

"I know what you are going to say," he interrupted, as she hesitated. "It was not for the purpose of harming you in any way that I tried that trick at the baseball ground to-day. I have a job to pitch in the Southern League if I can get there. It doesn't look as if I'd get there. I needed more money to pay my railroad fare. That's why I happened to bet on the ball game to-day. Felt sure Eaton would win, so I gave odds. I knew Hop Wilder. Did him a favor just after he was discharged from the reform school, and that's how I happened to call on him to help me out in my scheme. I saw they were going to bat Felix. If your brother went into the box, he might save the game. If he saved the game, I was busted. It was my idea that I could lead him off in pursuit of his automobile and keep him out of the game. That's why I tried that trick. I swear I didn't mean to injure you in the slightest."

The man's words and manner seemed to proclaim

him truthful and sincere. The very fact that he had spoken no word of threat and had made no threatening move allayed June's shock of terror, while his dejection began to arouse her sympathy. He was watching her closely, as if trying to read her thoughts, and suddenly he continued:

"I hope you believe me. I'm not the worst fellow in the world. No real harm came to you through anything I did. If I'm arrested and sent up, it means my ruin."

"You should have thought of that," came huskily from the girl's lips.

"Oh, I know it! I realize what a fool I was, but I was sore and bitter toward every one. Once I planned on a college career, but hard luck has knocked me out of that. My people might have helped me, but they are sore on account of my record, and they've all turned against me. I'm alone in the world, and I've got to paddle my own canoe. I've made a bad mess of it so far. Just now I'm in the rapids and liable to be wrecked any moment. You can wreck me. If you see fit, you can step to that door, open it, and call for help. In case you do, I'll wait until they come for me—I'll wait here."

He sat down on a chair.

"I want to do what is right," murmured June, in hesitation. "I should regret it if I became the cause of your complete downfall."

"Trust me. Give me a show."

"Then show me your face!" cried June, pointing at him. "Take off that beard!"

He shrugged his shoulders, lifted his hand, detached the false beard and removed it.

"Ah!" breathed the girl. "I've seen you before!"

The face revealed was not a particularly evil one. The man was a mere youth, scarcely more than a boy.

"Yes, I presume you have seen me before," he said. "I was at Fairport for a while. I played football there last fall. At that time I was known as Phil Hibbard. Now you can see why I have no very friendly feeling toward your brother. He went back on me at a critical time. I had to get out of Fairport after that ammonia-throwing trick in the game between Fairport and Fardale. Your brother planned that. It was his scheme. I suffered for it."

June did not doubt that the fellow spoke the truth.

Noting the impression he was making, the young man went on:

"You see, it's often the ones who are the least guilty who suffer punishment. My real name is Tom Grody. I entered Fairport as Phil Hibbard. After leaving Fairport I fancied I'd get into some other fitting school or college under still another name; but my record followed me, and all doors seemed barred for me."

"I'm very sorry," said the girl, her sympathy now fully aroused. "I regret that my brother should have anything to do with your misfortune. What do you propose to do now?"

"I hope to remain concealed here until after nightfall, when I shall attempt to get out of Eaton. My fate is in your hands, Miss Arlington. What will you do?"

"You can't remain here," breathed June. "My brother may come any moment and find you."

"The closet——"

"That won't do. He may look there, the same as I did. You'll have to leave this room."

Tom Grody rose to his feet.

"You're very kind," he said, readjusting the false beard. "I want you to know that I appreciate it.

Don't know how I'll raise the money I need to get away."

"If I had money, I'd help you," declared June; "but I haven't a cent."

"Oh, well, I'll have to get it somewhere—somehow. I want to thank you for——"

"Don't waste time in thanks," she urged. "Go as quickly as you can."

Continuing to mutter his seeming gratitude, Grody took her advice, strode to the door, flung it open, and stepped out.

A moment later he was hurled backward into that room, and a pantherish figure came after him, alighting upon him and pinning him to the floor.

It was Sparkfair.

CHAPTER IX.

SPARK AND SPARKER.

"Got you!" palpitated Dale.

With a gasp, June sprang forward and seized Sparkfair by the shoulders.

"Don't!" she entreated.

"Why, it's that scoundrel——"

"Yes, I know, I know! Let him up—let him go!"

"Let him go?" echoed Spark, astounded.

"Yes, yes!"

"But he——"

"Listen, Spark. He's not such a ruffian. I know him. He has told me all about it."

"You know him?" exclaimed Dale.

"Yes, I know him. For my sake let him go."

"For your sake I'll do almost anything," said the astonished boy; "but it seems to me——"

"Don't waste time in words! Chester may come! If you wish me to remain your friend, do as I say without further delay."

Immediately Sparkfair rose to his feet, permitting the man to get up.

"If you put it that way, there's only one thing for me to do," said Dale, still watching Grody like a hawk.

Fearlessly June grasped the hand of the man and pushed him toward the open door.

"Go!" she palpitated.

Without a word of retort, the fellow obeyed.

Sparkfair was leaning on the back of a chair when June turned toward him.

"You'll pardon me for my deportment in this mat-

ter," he said; "but I heard the voice of a man just as I reached that door, and I recognized the fellow the instant the door opened. That's how I happened to jump at him. Took him by surprise, I reckon, for he went down quickly enough. Of course, if you don't care to explain, I shall ask no questions. Your brother sent me up for you. He's waiting downstairs."

"But I will explain," said June swiftly.

And she told him all she knew about Tom Grody, beginning with the time he had entered Fairport Academy under the name of Phil Hibbard. As far as possible she sought to shield her brother in relating the facts of the ammonia throwing. Nevertheless, truthfulness compelled her to confess that the scheme originated in Chester's mind. She sought to give the impression that it was something of a wild and thoughtless piece of business on Chester's part.

It must be confessed that, although he admired June very much, Sparkfair was beginning to understand the true nature of Chester Arlington. Still, in a way, there was something queerly fascinating and interesting about Chet. In many things Arlington seemed offensive, yet behind it all there was an indescribable charm which attracted strangers to him.

"Perhaps I did wrong in letting that man go," confessed June, "but I felt it was the best thing under the circumstances."

"Well, let's hope you were right," smiled Dale. "Let's hope he dodges the local officers and reforms after he gets away. Come, June, your brother'll get tired of waiting."

Chet was already seated in the dining room when they appeared.

"Well, say," he exclaimed, "if you'd waited much longer, I think I'd have eaten the tablecloth and nap-

kins! It took you a long time to find her, Sparkfair, you rascal!"

June blushed.

"Do have a little regard for my feelings, Chester," she whispered, as she accepted the chair Sparkfair placed for her.

Arlington's shoulders shook as he laughed softly.

"Oh, you want to look out for her, Spark, old man," he said, winking at Dale. "She's an awful flirt. If she keeps on, she'll be a regular heartbreaker. It runs in the family. Now, you might not think it, but sometimes I have to take to the woods and climb a tree to get away from the girls who pursue me."

"That's unfortunate," smiled Dale.

"You're nervous, June," observed Chester, as he noticed that her hands were trembling slightly.

"Who wouldn't be, if they had such a rude brother!" she retorted. And Chet never suspected the fact that her nervousness had not been created by his chaffing remarks.

The meal was fairly satisfactory, and the trio seemed to enjoy it. Throughout it all, however, June continued to betray nervousness and anxiety, while her mind wandered from the various topics of conversation. She was wondering if Tom Grody still remained in the house, or if he had made good his escape. Once when loud voices were heard in the office she partly started up, but a burst of laughter reassured her, and she sank back on her chair.

After supper Chester seemed in no hurry to start out.

"I know the roads," he declared. "We'll have to make a good part of the run after dark, even if we start right away. I never like to hurry about these things. I'll smoke a cigarette or two and give my food

a chance to digest. Won't you have a cigarette, Spark?"

For a moment Dale hesitated, but he finally shook his head.

"Don't think I will," he answered. "I've cut them out while in training."

"Oh, that's supposed to be the case with me," smiled Chet, "but I smoke a whiff now and then. It doesn't hurt any one, you know. That's all rot. Oh, I suppose it might do some harm if a fellow kept at it all the time. It's sort of soothing and restful for me. Calms my nerves."

They proceeded to the room Sparkfair had secured, and there they remained, chatting while Chester smoked, until dusk came on.

"Well," sighed Arlington finally, throwing away the butt of his sixth cigarette, "I suppose we may as well be off. You settle the bill, Sparkfair. I'll make it right with you. I'll bring the bubble round in front."

Fifteen minutes later they rolled out of Eaton. June and Dale were on the back seat, while Chester drove the car.

"This beautiful evening is like May," said June.

"I think this beautiful evening is like June," retorted Dale, "only it's not quite beautiful enough to be up to the standard of June."

"Punning again!" exclaimed the girl. "That's an awful habit, Spark."

"Go ahead and talk while you get a chance," called Chet. "I'm going to hit it up as soon as we strike a good strip of road out here, and you won't have much chance for chatting."

The lamps were lighted, and they made a golden pathway on the brown road in advance. The stars came peering through the purple twilight, and the sweet breath of spring fanned their faces. On the level

road the motor hummed softly, and the car bore them along in a buoyant manner that seemed to thrill them with a realization of the power possessed by this palpitating, inanimate thing.

"Oh, she runs sweetly to-night!" cried Chet, as he opened the throttle and advanced the spark. "Here's that strip of road. Now we'll go some!"

They seemed literally to fly. The spinning wheels of the auto carried them over the road in a way that gave them a birdlike feeling.

"Look out for teams!" cried June.

"Oo-o-o-w-oo-o!" rang out the musical Gabriel horn as Chester pressed the pedal with his foot.

The moon was creeping up in the east as they came to a long hill.

About one-third of the way up the hill the motor ran beautifully, but finally it showed a loss of power and began to labor, while the speed of the car slackened rapidly.

"What in blazes is the matter now!" snapped Chet.

Slower and slower they moved, and soon the explosions became irregular, with now and then a sharp one in the muffler.

"Dickens take this old machine!" growled Arlington. "I believe both batteries are weak. She's not sparking right."

Nevertheless, the auto managed to pull over the crest of the hill on the low gear, and beyond the hill they came to another level stretch of road, which, however, was too rough to admit of the highest speed.

On this rough road the machine continued to behave badly.

Finally Chester stopped.

"I wonder if there's anything the matter with the valves," he speculated, as he sprang out, took a hand

electric lamp from his pocket, and opened the hood of the auto. One by one he examined the cylinder valves.

"I can't see but they set all right," he confessed. "I'm no chauffeur, you understand, Sparkfair. We did have a chauffeur to do the dirty work until my old man retired from business and grew penurious."

"Why, you know father says we can't afford a chauffeur," said June.

"Oh, fudge!" cried Chet. "That isn't so. Anyhow, if it were, I wouldn't tell people about it. I wonder if the carburetor is doing its duty. Suppose I'd know if I were an expert. You see, it takes an expert to definitely locate the trouble when these things get to kicking."

Once more getting in, he threw the switch onto the opposite battery, and pressed the self-starting pedal.

The machine refused to budge.

"Well," he cried, "it's plain that battery's no good! I'll have to go back to the other one."

He reversed the switch, growling because it was now necessary for him to get out and crank the machine.

This time the motor started after a vigorous cranking, but it stopped before Chester could reach the seat.

"Oh, blazes take the thing!" he snapped. "Is it going to hang us up here on the road to-night?"

"I hope not," laughed Dale. "I wouldn't mind it at all if it wasn't necessary for me to reach Fardale in time for that game to-morrow."

"Oh, you'll get there, all right. If I can't land you there, you can catch a train that will. You may have to spend the night in one of these country towns, though."

"I'm letting you do the main part of the worrying," said Sparkfair. "Can I help you any?"

"No; keep still. I'll twist the stuffing out of her if she doesn't start."

Chet turned the crank vigorously, and finally the motor started again. He sprang quickly to the side of the machine and advanced the spark.

"She goes!" he cried. "Perhaps the old thing's all right now. Never can tell about these machines. Sometimes they balk out of sheer contrariness. No one can find anything the matter with them."

For a quarter of a mile the auto ran on, although there were frequent missfires in the cylinders.

"I believe some of those spark plugs are sooted," observed Chester, again stopping. "I've got extra plugs here. It won't take long to put them in. Just hold this light for me, Sparkfair."

He went at it, removing the spark plugs from the cylinders and supplying their places with new ones.

When this was done, Chester once more had trouble in starting the motor, although he finally succeeded. Nevertheless, the car behaved in a most erratic manner, finally coming to a stop on the road which ran beside the shore of a tiny lake. Close at hand, opposite the lake, was a strip of woods which looked dark and dismal.

"Deuce take the blamed old machine!" snarled Chet. "Now I know the trouble is with the batteries. One is played out, and the other is too weak."

"What can you do?" asked June.

Chester was silent some moments.

"Can't do much of anything till I get those batteries recharged," he finally confessed. "Children, we're hung up. This is what I get by not carrying a voltameter to test those batteries. Bet you I spend a fiver for a voltameter as soon as I can get my hands on one."

"Well, this is interesting, to say the least," laughed

Sparkfair. "Are we to have the pleasure of sitting here the rest of the night?"

Then he whispered in June's ear:

"Mind, I said pleasure."

"We'll have to, unless I can get some farmer with a pair of good horses to yank us into the nearest town, where we can recharge these batteries," answered Arlington. "There's a light yonder on the shore of the lake. Must be a farmhouse there. If you'll remain here and look after sis, I'll hoof it round there and see what can be done. I don't suppose you mind staying here, do you, Spark?"

"Not a bit," answered Dale promptly. "Go ahead, Arlington—go as far as you like."

So Spark and June were left in the automobile, while Chester set out in search of assistance.

"It's rather cool," murmured June.

"Is it?" said Dale, sitting closer. "I'll serve as a windbreak."

They were silent some moments. Finally June called his attention to the effect of the moonlight shining on the ripples of the little lake. As they watched this band of shimmering silver a fish leaped in the path of the moonlight. Far away the frogs were "peeping" in a high-pitched chorus. The night air was imbued with the odor of growing things.

"I love——" began June.

"Whoo! whoo!" whooped an owl, from the depths of the woods.

"That's the question," said Dale. "Even the owl wants to know who you love."

"Why, I love the spring, I love the world, I love everything."

Again they were silent for some time, and, as June shivered once more, Dale secured the robe Chester had been using. He folded this and passed it round the

girl's shoulders. As he did so, his arm slipped down to her waist, and he forgot to remove it.

"Are you warmer now?" he asked.

"Much," she answered.

There was another long silence.

"Seems to me Chester is taking a long time to return," June finally said.

"The longer, the better it suits me," declared Dale.

Three minutes later they heard footsteps approaching.

"Here he comes," murmured June, as she straightened up with something like a sigh.

"Yes," said Dale, "here he comes. Why didn't his motor run down?"

Then, of a sudden, he cocked his ear and listened in an attitude of surprise.

"Can't be your brother," he said. "The person is coming the other way."

He opened the door at his side and stepped out upon the road. The shadows behind the auto were quite thick, as both sides of the highway were lined by trees. In the midst of these shadows Dale finally detected an advancing figure.

"Hello!" he called. "Who are you?"

"I'm a gentleman of the road," was the answer, "and I need a little assistance."

Click-click!

That double click gave Sparkfair an electric thrill. He saw the man lift his hand as he stepped into the moonlight. The light showed on something bright and gleaming gripped in that hand.

It was a revolver!

CHAPTER X.

A CAPTURE.

"Oh, what a pretty plaything!" murmured Dale, seeming to gaze with admiration at the shining revolver. "Is it for me? Are you going to make me a present? You're awfully kind!"

"Hold on!" growled the stranger. "Don't get fresh, young fellow! This gun is loaded, and I'm liable to give you a lead pill."

"You must be a doctor," chirped Dale, in his most unruffled manner. "I don't need a pill, doctor. I assure you I haven't had the slightest indisposition this spring. Usually have spring fever, but somehow I've dodged it thus far, and I'm in fine trim. I presume you're on your way to visit a patient, doctor. Well, I'll not delay you, for, if I do, the patient may become impatient. That's awful—I acknowledge it's awful. Hope you haven't heart disease, doc. Still, if you have heart disease, will you please drop dead?"

Evidently the man with the revolver was somewhat astonished by this flippant nonchalance and this fluent flow of language. In the face of such apparent peril this queer young chap hardly seemed to blink, and he chattered away in such a free-and-easy manner that the "gentleman of the road" found it difficult to get in a word himself. Finally the "gentleman" uttered a savage oath and commanded Spark to shut up.

"Hush! hush!" whispered Dale. "My dear fellow, don't you know there's a lady present? Can't you see her sitting in this busted bubble? Even if she were not here, such language is utterly inexcusable. Only a parson has any real privilege of speaking about that

hot place you just mentioned. Is that a real pistol, or is it a play gun?"

"It's the real thing, young fellow. You bet your life! Come, now, stop this talk, hold up your hands and I'll go through your pockets."

"Are you going through my pockets? My gracious! you must be one of those legerdemain fellows who do all sorts of startling stunts. Now, I can go through a door myself, but I don't believe I could get through any one's pocket, even if I tried my prettiest."

"All this talk won't do you any good. You've got to cough."

Dale coughed promptly.

"I'm a little out of practice," he murmured apologetically. "Haven't had a cold for so long that I've almost forgotten how to cough properly."

"I want your money."

"Money? Real money? Real coin of the realm? Real United States currency? Say, stranger, you've come to the wrong shop. I haven't any money to spare this evening. I need it myself. I'm awfully sorry, old chap, but——"

"You'll be sorrier before I'm through with you!" snarled the man. "I've got to have money, and you'll have to fork over every dollar in your jeans!"

"Well, that won't overburden you," cheerfully retorted Sparkfair. "You'll be able to carry it all without staggering a bit."

In spite of the threatening pistol and the man's order to keep his hands up, Dale started to rummage through his pockets. Suddenly he paused and cocked his ear toward the road which ran along the lake shore.

Honk! honk!

Faint and far away sounded an automobile horn.

The ruffian gave a snarl.

"Lively!" he hissed. "Fork over your money!"

"Why, that sounds like another bubble," murmured Spark heedlessly. "Seems to me there's some one coming in an auto. Perhaps they'll have some money for you, sir. Perhaps they'll be in delicate health and all ready to cough the moment you invite them."

Barely had he uttered these words when Sparkfair suddenly ducked and lunged forward, flinging himself headfirst into the pit of the man's stomach.

Bang!

The pistol was discharged harmlessly, while man and boy went down upon the dusty road.

Honk! honk!

The sound of the automobile horn was more distinct.

With a cry, June Arlington started up, watching two struggling figures upon the ground. The nerve and the nonchalance of Sparkfair had bewildered June, while it filled her with a feeling of admiration for this cool, reckless boy, who dared thus boldly face an armed highwayman. Now she was greatly terrified, for she saw that, although the man had been taken by surprise and hurled to the ground, a furious struggle was going on, with every probability that the highwayman would conquer.

The girl hurriedly sprang down from the car, her hands shaking and her heart seeming to beat madly in her throat.

Honk! honk!

Nearer still sounded the horn.

"Hold him, Spark!" panted June. "There's help coming!"

Brokenly the battling lad retorted:

"Oh, I'm having—not the—slightest trouble in holding him—on top of me."

"You young fool!" snarled the ruffian, as he partly

rose on Dale's breast, pinning the lad to the ground. "I'll choke the life out of you!"

The thug's hands were fastened on Sparkfair's throat.

"Oh, Dale! Dale!" cried June. "Is he choking you? Is he——"

There was no answer. Under the circumstances Sparkfair could not answer.

At her feet the girl saw something gleaming silvery bright. She caught it up.

It was the revolver.

Reversing the weapon and grasping the barrel, June Arlington lifted her hand and struck straight and hard at the head of the ruffian.

That blow did the work. Without a sound, the man toppled over, stunned and helpless for the time being.

"Thanks, June!" gasped Dale, as he quickly rose and grasped the fallen scoundrel. "Give me something to tie his hands. There ought to be some stout cord in the tool box. Hurry as much as possible, for the 'gentleman of the road' may recover and continue to agitate himself."

June lost no time in opening the tool box, and to her delight she found a bit of stout cord neatly coiled in one corner.

"Give it to me," urged Dale, as he turned the highwayman face downward. "Thank you. I'll bind his little hannies so that he'll be fairly comfortable, and we'll be wholly so."

Sparkfair worked swiftly and deftly, knotting the cord about the man's wrists and finally passing it round his elbows and tying it there.

Honk! honk!

"Here it comes!" delightedly cried June, as the lights of an automobile came into full view round a bend.

The machine was at hand a moment later, and the voice of Chester Arlington called in surprise:

"What's going on here?"

The lights of the strange automobile had revealed June, Dale, and the captured ruffian.

"Oh, Chester," exclaimed June, "we've had such a terrible experience! A highwayman tried to rob us, but Dale grappled with him and captured him."

"I beg to state that Miss Arlington's modesty has kept her from telling the whole truth. She is the one who captured the ruffian. He had me down and was playfully squeezing my windpipe when she hit him a tap on the cabeza that put him out of commission. I've just tied his hands behind him, but June deserves the credit of the capture."

"Well, I should say there had been something doing!" burst from Chester, as he came forward. "By great luck I happened to find a gentleman out with his auto, and he has agreed to take us in tow. Let's have a look at this scoundrel."

Chet had hurried forward, and he now seized the ruffian, turned him on his back, and lifted his head so that the automobile lights shone full and fair upon his face.

June uttered a low cry, for the light revealed the face of Tom Grody, still partly disguised by the false beard.

CHAPTER XI.

A PERILOUS LEAP.

"Well, I rather think I know that bird!" burst from Chester. "If I'm not mistaken, he's the chap who tried that little trick at the Eaton baseball field to-day. Talk about luck! Sis, you've captured the ruffian—you and Dale. We'll take this fine man back to Eaton and hand him over to the authorities."

Not a word came from June. She was speechless with dismay and disappointment. She had trusted this young ruffian, fully believing him sincere in his professed repentance, and the result was something which staggered her and filled her with an intense emotion of sorrow.

Chet yanked the false beard from Grody's face as the man began to recover consciousness and mutter thickly.

Another cry burst from Arlington's lips.

"Jupiter!" he palpitated. "Of all things! So help me, it's Hibbard! Wouldn't that jar you some! Now I understand how the whelp came to try that trick. Well, you've dropped pretty low, Phil Hibbard—pretty low!"

"Thanks to you!" came huskily from the captured rascal's lips. "You helped push me down, Arlington."

"Yes, and I'll land you where you belong, behind the bars!" grated Chet. "Two fancy jobs of this sort in one day should jug you for a good long time. So you've turned highwayman, have you! Give me a hand, Sparkfair. We'll move him to one side and let Mr. Snow pass."

The captive was dragged to the side of the road,

and the man in the rescuing automobile moved his machine past them on the low gear.

"Are you sure his hands are tightly bound, Sparkfair?" questioned Arlington. "He can't get away?"

"If he does, he'll do a trick that would be creditable for Houdini," retorted Dale.

The rascal made no protest as they lifted him to his feet and forced him to get into the auto. Chester took the pistol from June's hands and thrust it into the grasp of Mr. Snow, directing him to keep guard over the ruffian.

"I think we can turn this machine of mine together, Spark," he said. "We must look out not to get it off the level roadbed, for it will be too heavy to turn by hand in case we do."

They went at the work, which was no small matter, working the automobile round bit by bit. This job employed them for at least thirty minutes, but they finally succeeded in accomplishing their purpose, and Chester's car was once more headed toward Eaton. Arlington then found a stout rope in the machine owned by Snow, and, with the aid of this, the "dead" bubble was taken in tow.

"You sit in my machine with June, Spark," directed Chester. "I'll take that scoundrel's popgun and sit beside him in the other. It's too bad you've been delayed this way, but I'll get you through in time to pitch that game to-morrow. Depend on me."

During the return trip to Eaton Tom Grody made several ineffectual appeals to Arlington. Chester remained unmoved through it all, quietly reiterating his assertion that Grody would have to face the punishment for his criminal acts.

On the other hand, at Sparkfair's side, June remained silent a long while. Finally Dale discovered that the girl was weeping.

"I know how you feel about it, June," he whispered softly, all the flippancy gone from his voice and manner. "I'm disappointed myself. I did hope that fellow would reform after your generosity toward him."

"I wonder if any one really reforms after he begins to go wrong?" murmured June. And just then she was thinking of her brother, instead of Tom Grody.

"Oh, sure, sure!" answered Dale. "Lots of chaps make false steps and realize their folly in time to brace up and walk the straight and narrow path."

Dale was so consoling that June finally dried her tears and snuggled closer to him.

They were on the front seat, as it was necessary for Spark to keep the steering wheel steady, which prevented the "dead" machine from swerving at the end of the long rope.

After a while, June murmured:

"You haven't had much experience in steering an auto, have you, Spark?"

"Why?" questioned Dale.

"Because I notice you have to use both hands."

That was enough for Sparkfair. During the rest of the trip into Eaton his right hand was the only one employed at the wheel.

Eaton being a quiet, humdrum little country town, the reappearance of Arlington with the captured ruffian quickly created considerable excitement. The deputy sheriff had gone home and was in bed, but a messenger routed him out, and he came rushing to the hotel, handcuffs in hand, to take the captive.

"Same feller, is it?" he cried, having ironed Grody. "Playing the highwayman, was he? Well, by jing! I see where he gits his medicine! Had a pistol, did he? Fired a shot, hey? I bet you this case goes to the criminal court. But, look here, you fellers and you

gal, you've gut to stay here till this rascal can be brung up before Judge Ritter to-morrow."

"Impossible!" retorted Chester. "We have to leave early in the morning."

"Not by a jugful!" grimly asserted the officer. "They can't none of you go till the judge binds this criminal over for the s'perior court. If you don't promise to stay and 'pear against him, I'll have to detain you all under arrest as witnesses. That's business. Now, I want your promise."

Chester shrugged his shoulders.

"It won't bother me much," he said, "but you must let my friend, Sparkfair, go. He's wanted in Fardale. He can take the first train to-morrow."

"No, siree!" grimly cried the deputy sheriff. "We want him, too! He'll have to stay!"

"Well, that's fine!" exclaimed Dale. "Evidently I'm not going to reach Fardale in time for that game to-morrow. At what hour does court sit here?"

"Well, I s'pose the judge will call it about ten-thirty."

"Ten-thirty?" muttered Spark. "It shouldn't take him more than half an hour to dispose of this case. Is there any train I can get after that?"

"No train that will take you through to Fardale in time," answered Chester; "but I'll have my batteries recharged and everything ready, old man. I can get you through with my automobile. I'll do it, too. We may as well take it easy."

Dale shrugged his shoulders.

"All right," he laughed, with an air of resignation; "I'll depend on you, Arlington. I have another pitcher with the team, of course, and he might be all right, although I'm just a bit afraid to trust him. His name is Featherstone. He is a good man in the box, but rather hot-headed, and we've not been the best of

friends. The Fardale team trimmed us on Farnham Hall Field last week, and I'm anxious to return the compliment at Fardale."

"Do you think you can do it?" eagerly asked Chester.

"I can try," answered Dale. "This has been a rather exciting day, but I hope to get a good night's sleep just the same."

Spark did get a good night's sleep, and he rose in the morning looking fresh and fit for anything. He took breakfast with Chester and June, and they enjoyed a morning walk before the prisoner was arraigned before the local trial justice.

A trial of this sort was enough to bring out a crowd of villagers, and the little courtroom was crowded to suffocation.

Looking dejected and wretched, Tom Grody was arraigned before the judge. The evidence against him was heard, June being the last to testify, but at the close she suddenly made an earnest appeal to the judge for leniency toward Grody.

"Please give him a chance, judge," she urged. "I'm sure he's not all bad."

The justice asked the prisoner what he had to say for himself. At first Grody had pleaded not guilty, but now he rose and despairingly confessed his guilt. He acknowledged that the charge against him was just and he failed to make any excuses for his action.

"In the face of this confession, despite the young lady's appeal," said the judge, "there is only one course for me to pursue. I shall have to bind you over for trial by the criminal court."

It was after eleven when Chester Arlington once more piloted the automobile out of Eaton, with Dale and June on the rear seat.

"Oh, I'll land you in Fardale in time to change your

clothes and practice for that game, Spark!" cried Chet. "June has brought a lunch from the hotel, so you won't have to go into the game hungry."

"June is very thoughtful," said Sparkfair.

In spite of Chester's confidence, there was trouble in store for them, as the automobile, after running easily for ten miles, began to balk and act like a contrary creature of life.

Chester grumbled and fussed, stopping repeatedly to search for the source of trouble, which he seemed unable to locate.

"Can't get power on these grades!" he growled. "She runs all right down hill or on a level, but there's something wrong with the transmission or clutch when we have to take a hill."

Although he tightened the clutch, the machine continued to behave badly, and they lost time steadily.

At twelve-thirty Arlington glanced anxiously at his watch.

"If this keeps up," he confessed, "you'll be late, the best I can do, Spark. I'm sorry, old man."

"I'm sorry, too," said Dale. "Somehow I have a feeling that Featherstone can't hold Fardale down. I'd give anything if I could reach there in time."

Finally Chet found himself hung up on a long, hard grade, and he sprang out for the purpose of again seeking the source of trouble.

"This old bunch of scrap iron must go to the repair shop!" he exclaimed. "I believe there is something in one of those cylinders."

It was fully one-thirty when they finally crept over the top of the hill. On the down grade everything ran smoothly, and they were flying by the time the foot of the incline was reached. Nevertheless, the machine dragged on the next rise and barely crawled over it.

"There's one chance for you, Spark," called Arling-

ton, bringing the automobile to a stand after the crest of the rise was fairly passed.

"What's that?" questioned Dale eagerly.

"If we strike for Tipton, you may catch a train there. It's a through train that doesn't stop, but we'll flag it if we can get there."

"Then let's head toward Tipton," urged Spark.

"Get in here beside me," invited Arlington. "You may have to jump out in a hurry."

"I hate to leave this back seat," muttered Dale. But he followed Chester's suggestion.

"There's a long hill this side of Tipton," said Arlington. "If we can reach the top of that, all right, I fancy this old machine will carry us the rest of the way a-humming."

Dale felt like getting out to push as the auto dragged itself with snaillike slowness up that long hill. Near the top Arlington once more looked at his watch.

"Close! close!" he growled, shaking his head. "I'm afraid we can't do it!"

On the down grade he opened the throttle wide, and they were soon flying like the wind.

"There's the train!" cried June.

"Yes, there it is!" snarled Chet. "We're not going to reach the station! There's a crossing this side. The road runs close to the track. Let's see if we can't reach that crossing and hold that train up."

Half of his words were not heard by Sparkfair, for they were now flying at such speed that the air whistled past their ears like a hurricane. Chester's cap flew off, but he paid no attention to that.

Below them the train came into view, but it seemed that they were making fully as much speed. Nevertheless, Chester still felt it impossible to reach the crossing. He was right, for as they came whizzing down the road which wound close to the railroad track, the

locomotive had already passed them. They found themselves running at the side of the train, which was very close at hand.

Suddenly, with dare-devil recklessness, Chester swerved close to the rear of the speeding train, even as it was drawing past them.

"Jump!" he yelled.

Sparkfair rose to his feet. Still more daring and reckless than Arlington, he made a mad spring for the platform of the last car.

June uttered a cry of terror.

Dale's fingers caught the iron handrail of the rear platform, and a moment later he was on the steps, turning to wave a triumphant farewell to Arlington and June.

CHAPTER XII.

BARELY IN TIME.

For seven innings Guy Featherstone did splendidly in the box for Farnham Hall. In the first of the eighth the visitors failed to secure a run, but the score was seven to four in their favor, and things looked bright.

"I'd certainly like to know what has become of Spark," said Bob Bubbs. "It's mighty strange. We haven't heard a word from him."

"Never mind," laughed Fred Hollis. "We're going to win this game just the same. Feather is all to the good to-day."

But Featherstone's time of trial was coming—yes, it was at hand.

Fardale came up in the eighth with the head of the batting list leading off. Gardner opened with a two-bagger and scored on Darrell's beautiful single to right. Barron Black was out at first, but Darrell had reached second.

Then Merriwell laced out another single to right field, and Hal crossed the pan.

"Dern their picters!" squawked Obediah Tubbs. "We've got 'em goin' now! Only one more score to tie! Come, Jolliby, help along the good cause, and I'll remunerate you with a handsome custard pie!"

"Let him pup-pup-pup-put it over!" stuttered Chip, as he stepped out to the plate.

Featherstone was nervous now, and he did his best to fool the tall batter, which finally led him into a bad hole and forced him to give Chip a pass.

"Whoop!" roared Buckhart. "It's all off if Bob ever lands on the leather!"

Big Bob Singleton was the hitter, and the knowledge of his reputation as a slugger added to Feather's mental disturbance.

Again the Farnham Hall pitcher made the mistake of trying too hard to fool the batter and placed himself in a bad hole by handing up three balls in succession.

Then Singleton calmly waited and was presented with a pass to first.

The bases were filled, and Farnham Hall was on the anxious seat.

" 'Ere's where we win, don't you know!" cried Billy Bradley. " 'Ere's the gentleman from Texas! 'E'll bring you 'ome, boys!"

Buckhart strode forth to the plate.

Brad waited for a good one and smashed the third ball pitched. He drove it along the ground with great speed straight into the hands of Bubbs.

Bob failed to pick the ball up cleanly and then booted it around in his endeavor to get hold of it. When he did secure it, Merriwell was already at the plate, and it was too late to catch Buckhart at first.

The score was tied.

"Oh, for Sparkfair now!" groaned Lawrence Graves, who was covering first.

There was a sudden shout, for at this critical juncture Dale Sparkfair came hurrying through the gate and trotted toward the visitors' bench. His cap was gone, and his face was covered with perspiration.

The Farnham Hall lads sent up a cheer.

"Hold on!" shouted Hi Bemis, who was acting as captain of the team. "Give us a show, Fardale! We want to change pitchers!"

He came rushing in from the field and appealed to Dick.

"Spark isn't in uniform," he said, "but we need him pretty bad. Won't you let him come in?"

"Sure," laughed young Merriwell. "Glad to see you, Sparkfair, old man. Peel off and get into the game."

Dale expressed his thanks and lost no time in preparing for the work.

"How does the game stand, Bemis?" he asked.

"We had 'em foul up to this inning," answered Hi. "They've made three runs and tied the score. It's seven to seven, with one man out and the bases all full. If you can just save this game, Spark!"

"I can try," said Dale. "Let me have a few moments to limber my arm, Merriwell?"

"Take your time," said Dick.

Guy Featherstone walked to the bench, shaking his head a bit.

"I've done my best," he muttered. "They got that last run through an error. It wasn't my fault."

In a few moments Sparkfair had warmed up and was toeing the pitcher's plate.

Billy Bradley faced him, and Dale smiled as he saw the look of grim satisfaction on the face of Joe Crowfoot, who crouched behind Billy's bat.

Never in his life had Spark opened up with the speed he now used, and it was not long before Bradley frantically fanned and "passed away."

Bob Bubbs whooped with delight.

"That's the stuff! that's the stuff!" he chattered. "Don't give us another show to play butter fingers the way I did! Fan 'em! fan 'em!"

"Dern my picter!" muttered Tubbs, waddling out. "I've got to git a hit!"

Obediah slashed at the first ball and popped up an infield fly, which Bubbs held. And the eighth inning was over, with the score tied.

The remainder of that game, which soon ran into extra innings, proved heartbreaking for both players

and spectators. Farnham Hall died in one-two-three order in the ninth, but Sparkfair retaliated by striking out Gardner and Darrell and forcing Black to hit a weak one into the diamond.

In the tenth neither team scored.

At the beginning of the eleventh the big gate at one side of the field was pushed open, and Chester Arlington piloted his automobile onto the field.

Dale hurried over to him.

"The game doesn't seem to be over, Spark," laughed Chet. "How are you making it?"

"This is the beginning of the eleventh."

"Whew!" whistled Chester. "Evidently you didn't have time to change your clothes after getting here."

"I haven't been here long."

"Haven't?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Everything went wrong. There was a freight car off the track ahead of us on the line, and we were delayed a long time while they got it back onto the rails. I reached Fardale in time to get into this game in the last of the eighth. The score is seven to seven."

"Well, you deserve to win," asserted Chester. "I hope you do, but I'm afraid you can't. Merriwell always has horseshoe luck in extra-inning games. He's on his own turf, too."

The eleventh inning went by with no runs, and there was wild excitement as the twelfth began. In this inning Hollis started off well with a clean hit. Graves advanced him on a single. Then Crowfoot struck out. Barking was an easy out to first, and Bubbs put up a foul fly, which was captured.

"Merriwell will win now," muttered Arlington regretfully. "I don't suppose you care, June? I suppose you'd like to see him win?"

"I want to see the best team win," said June.

Chet looked round at her with a curious expression.

"Oh-ho!" he laughed. "Seems to me I smell a mice! At last Richard Merriwell has a rival!"

June blushed furiously and protested, but Chester continued to chuckle.

It was Dick Merriwell who made a strong bid for the game in the last of the twelfth by lacing out a beautiful two-bagger. Nevertheless, he died on second, for none of the batters following him could help him along.

In the thirteenth Netterby and Bemis fell easy victims to Dick's benders.

Then Sparkfair imitated Merriwell's example by securing a clean two-bagger.

"That's going some, Spark!" laughed Dick.

"But I opine the gent has gone as far as he will," said Buckhart.

Jake Lander, apparently half asleep, permitted two strikes to be called on him, then smashed a hot one at Billy Bradley, who muffed the ball.

Before the ball could be recovered Sparkfair was on third, and Lander had arrived at first.

Jake was not as sleepy as he seemed. On the first ball pitched to Hollis, Jake pranced down toward second, but seemed so awkward and slow about it that Dick snapped the ball to Darrell, catching Lander between the bases.

Immediately Jake began to dodge back and forth, while Sparkfair edged off third, ready to make a dash for the plate.

At the proper moment Dale went leaping toward home.

The ball was promptly thrown to Buckhart, but it struck in Brad's big mitt and dropped out, while Dale slid to the rubber in a cloud of dust.

Farnham Hall had a lead of one run.

"Never mum-mum-mum-mind!" chattered Jolliby. "We'll square that up all right when we go to bub-bub-bub-bat."

Hollis did not reach first.

Fardale was in a fiercely determined mood as she again came to bat. The cadets on the bleachers cheered, but neither the fierceness of the players nor the cheering of the cadets served to rattle Sparkfair. He was working as if his life depended on it, and he knew that over at one side of the diamond a girl was watching his every move. Only one of the three men who faced him hit the ball, and this fellow simply lifted an easy infield fly. The three men were out, and Farnham Hall had defeated Fardale on her own field.

Merriwell was the first to congratulate Dale. He shook his hand and complimented him warmly on his splendid work.

Together Dick and Dale walked toward the automobile.

"Here come the rivals," chuckled Chet, once more turning toward his sister. "And it strikes me that Mr. Merriwell will run second in this race from now on."

CHAPTER XIII.

REVOLUTION.

Under the instructions of Bruce Browning the second class was taking the regular forenoon drill in the big gymnasium at Farnham Hall. Forty boys stood in four lines of ten each and went through the graceful movements of the drill without apparatus of any sort. All their motions were precise and regular to a point of minuteness and perfection such as is usually attained by trained soldiers.

Browning himself was working, for it was necessary for him to perform the movements as he stood alone in front of the class which was imitating him. This was genuine work, as Bruce was compelled to handle three classes a day, into which all the boys of the school had been divided. It was telling on the big fellow, too, for he had lost some of his superfluous flesh, and it must be acknowledged that he was in far better condition than he had been when he arrived at the school and entered upon his duties there.

While the second class was drilling, the first class, in charge of a class captain, having performed their tasks in the gym, were briskly trotting around the track of Farnham Field. This, too, was like real work for a few of the boys in the class, and these lazy ones were glad when it was finished and they jogged back to the big gymnasium to take their showers and rubdowns.

The second class was dismissed in due time, and the third and final class marched onto the cleared floor of the gym in perfect order, performed a few fancy evolutions, and lined up in four rows.

Browning mopped his perspiring face with a handkerchief, took a deep breath, and went at it again.

It was necessary that all the boys in the school should take part in these calisthenic drills without apparatus. No excuse of a weak heart or any other affliction sufficed to let a boy off entirely. His physical condition was thoroughly inspected by Doctor Schnitzle, who made a report to Merriwell, and from this report Frank decided on the exercises proper for the pupil.

For those of a genuinely athletic turn or build there was heavier work with the medicine balls and chest weights, and horses and flying rings and bars and other apparatus.

Those who fancied the boys of Farnham Hall did not work at all were greatly mistaken. Still, they were not overworked, and Merry discovered that many of them had much time which was not profitably occupied. In order to take up this time in a manner that would accrue to the best for the boys, Frank finally decided upon a course on which he had lately been meditating. The result of this was a number of typewritten notices placed in prominent places for the boys to read.

In the big general dressing room a group of boys had clustered in front of one of these notices, which was causing no end of discussion and comment.

"I tell you it's an outrage!" rasped Sim Scrogg fiercely. "We didn't come here for anything of the sort, and I'm against it!"

"Great Jamaica ginger!" exclaimed Hi Bemis. "I can git plenty of reg'lar work to home on the old farm! Here we're told that beginnin' next Monday every boy in the school will be expected to perform two hours a day of some sort of manual labor."

"Manual labor?" yawned Arthur Irving. "I've heard of that. What is it?"

"Evidently you'll find out along with the rest of us," chuckled Towser Bubbs. "Jiminy crickets, fellers, we're up against it! Mr. Merriwell proposes to have all the work of the school done by the scholars. Now what do you think of that? I wonder what he'll have me do? Will he turn me into a cook or a chambermaid?"

"We 're all chambermaids," reminded Berlin Brooks. "It's been one of the established rules that we should take care of our rooms, which are inspected regularly to see that everything is kept up to the mark. All the same, speaking about cooks, that's no joke. If we do all the work here, some of us will have to roll up our sleeves and go into the kitchen."

"Wow! wow!" barked Bubbs. "Me to the tall timber! Back to the woods for mine!"

"Do you see this?" demanded Marlow Netterby, pointing to a certain section of the typewritten notice. "Mr. Merriwell is going to put up a new building, and he proposes that we shall build it, under the directions of the regular constructors. I see myself lugging bricks and mortar."

"I haven't read that notice," confessed Will Spencer. "What's to be the purpose of this new building?"

"Why, we're going to have a trades school here," answered Netterby. "In the new building we'll be taught to become cobblers, tinsmiths, carpenters, et cetera. Think of that!"

"I've thought about it," sighed Arthur Irving. "I propose to duck. I'm not going to make a work horse of myself. I'm going to follow a profession. What's the good of a trade for a professional man?"

"I think Mr. Merriwell has overstepped himself!" rasped Simeon Scrogg, after hurriedly glancing

around. "By George! we work enough as it is. The original purpose of this school was to teach us to become athletes, not laborers. I think we ought to rebel against this innovation."

Guy Featherstone had been listening without saying a great deal. He noted the general sentiment of the boys and was struck by a sudden idea that caused him to speak up at this juncture.

"Simply because we do not pay a tuition fee here, we are regarded as subjects of charity," he observed. "You know on the town poor farms throughout the country the paupers are required to perform a certain amount of labor in case they are physically capable. Apparently we're no better than paupers."

"I'm going to write home without delay and see if my folks won't yank me out of this old school," declared Oliver Slick. "It's getting worse and worse every day. At first I thought it a snap, but the more a chap does here the more he is expected to do."

"Probably the school will go bust if you leave, Oily," said Featherstone, with no effect to conceal a sneer. "I'm not anxious to get away; but, like all the rest, I have no great fancy for these two hours a day of manual labor."

"What are you going to do about it, Feather?" inquired a laughing voice.

It was Dale Sparkfair who had joined the group.

Featherstone turned sharply on Spark.

"What are you going to do about it?" he demanded.

"I expect I'll do the same as the rest of you," was the answer. "I'll work."

"Evidently you like it! Evidently you think it a great idea! Well, you'll find yourself mighty lonesome in thinking so. You won't discover many chaps who'll take the same view of it, Sparkfair."

"Perhaps not at present," laughed Dale; "but I'm

certain they'll all come round. It won't kill me to work two hours a day, and it won't kill the rest of you."

"I presume you're anxious to learn a trade?" remarked Irving. "I presume you expect to become a shoe cobbler or a tin tinker?"

"Expect anything you like, Irving. My father is a parson, but I'm not following in the footsteps of dear old dad. Now, what's the use growling and fussing, fellows? You know we'll have to do anything Frank Merriwell cuts out for us to do."

"Is that so!" cried Featherstone. "Perhaps we will, and perhaps we won't! There are a few rebels here. This is a time of rebellion."

"There's lots of room for you in Russia," chuckled Dale. "You'd make a hot revolutionist, Feather. If you started out with a bomb, you'd find yourself on the bum in short order."

"Oh, wow! wow!" came from Bubbs. "Hit him, somebody—hit him with a hammer!"

"Never mind," sneered Feather; "let him do the knocking. Sparkfair, you surprise me. You've been the first fellow to kick over the traces heretofore. When all the rest were behaving themselves, you found a way of kicking up a rumpus. Now, when all the rest are inclined to kick, you're gentle as a cooing dove."

"There's a reason," smiled Dale. "I suppose if all you fellows were delighted over this new scheme and thought it splendid, I'd be the kicker. Just because I find you growling and chewing the rag, I'm inclined to go in the opposite direction."

"You won't find many followers."

"Won't I?"

"Not on your life! You've been sort of a leader at

most things, but you've not struck the popular side this time, Spark."

"You seem elated over it, Feather. Evidently you have a bee buzzing in your bonnet. Evidently you fancy you see an opening for number one. I salute you, General Featherstone, leader of the revolutionists. But, say, my boys, have you ever taken pains in the course of your historical studies to note what usually happens to revolutionists? They lose their heads, Feather. Above all things, my boy, don't lose your head."

"George Washington didn't lose his."

"Oh, I see how it is! You've stepped into the shoes of Washington! My goodness, Feather, they're a bad fit for you! You can't fill those shoes! You're bound to wabble round in them frightfully!"

"Oh, mock! mock! Laugh and sneer!" cried Guy exasperatedly. "Don't think you're the whole thing, Spark! You just wait and see what happens! We're not slaves! We propose to have liberty here!"

"Listen to the voice of Patrick Henry!" urged Dale, with a sweep of his hand. " 'Give me liberty or give me death!' You'll make a beautiful corpse, Feather. In fact, you do make a beautiful corpse, for you've been a dead one a long time. You don't know it. You think you're alive. Once or twice I've been deceived into thinking there might be a spark of life left in your bosom, but I'm afraid it's an error. Go on with the revolution. Let it come. Muster your forces, General Featherstone, but keep your collar off. It will save you the trouble of removing it when they chuck you under the guillotine."

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW CAMP.

In his heart Guy Featherstone was rejoicing. The popularity of Sparkfair had irritated and exasperated Guy. But now, at last, it seemed that Dale had deliberately chosen to take the unpopular side of a most important question.

True, Spark would be allied with Frank Merriwell, and this would give him a great deal of strength, yet Feather was confident that by a prompt and determined move he could reinstate himself with the majority of the boys and destroy Dale's influence as a leader. At first Feather was somewhat startled by the daring of his own scheme. Up to this point no boy had deliberately and openly rebelled against the authority of Frank Merriwell. Had Feather been alone in his rebellious attitude, or had he been supported by only a few of the boys, he would not have dared to carry his wild scheme into execution. As long as the great majority were with him, he resolved to move without delay, and he soon set about perfecting his plot.

Merry had an engagement that would take him away from Bloomfield that very afternoon. This fact reached Featherstone's ears and caused him high elation.

It was one of Frank's plans to have a summer camp somewhere in the vicinity of Farnham Hall, so that the boys could get the benefit of real outdoor life during the warmer months. He had ordered a large number of fine tents, and these had arrived. Together with Diamond, he was inspecting these tents in the big storeroom when Victor Maynard came hurrying in upon them.

"I've been looking for you, Mr. Merriweli," said Vic, in a guarded tone. "I wanted to see you alone. I have something very important to tell you."

In spite of his determination to treat Maynard justly, Frank could not like the boy, for he well knew Victor's inclination to eavesdrop, pry into secrets, and "peach" on his companions.

"It will have to be something unusually important, Maynard," said Merry. "I'm very busy just now."

"Oh, but it is—it is," asserted Vic. "It's something you ought to know. It's something you must know. Perhaps you're not aware of it, sir, but the boys are greatly exasperated, and they——"

"Exasperated?"

"Yes, sir."

"About what?"

"Over that new plan of yours to have each of them perform two hours of manual labor each day. They don't like it. They don't think you have any right to compel them to do ordinary work."

"Is this the important thing you have to tell me? Were you chosen as the representative of these boys who objected to that requirement? Did they send you here to inform me of their objections?"

"Oh, no, sir; they don't know anything about it. They don't know I have come here to tell you. Those fellows didn't take me into their confidence at all. I got onto it by accident. I couldn't help it very well, for almost every fellow is kicking about it."

"And, as soon as you found out about it, you rushed here to post me, did you? Wouldn't it have been better had you permitted these kickers, as you call them, to speak to me themselves? It's a bad thing to be always tattling, my boy."

Vic flushed a little.

"You don't understand, sir. You don't know what

they're talking about. You don't know what they're planning to do. Just let me tell you."

He saw that Merriwell was displeased and inclined to dismiss him abruptly. Therefore he actually confused his words in the haste of telling it all before he could be checked.

"They declare they're going to rebel. Featherstone is at the head of it. They're actually planning to——"

"That will do, Maynard!" interrupted Frank, in a tone of voice that cut the blabber short. "Not another word."

Vic looked sorrowful and disgusted, yet he dared not continue, for he felt that such a thing would anger the master of Farnham Hall beyond the safety point.

With a gesture Merry directed Vic to depart, and Maynard slowly left the storeroom.

"Perhaps you'll be sorry you didn't let me tell you the whole thing," muttered the tattler. "This is no silly matter. This is no small piece of business. When fully three-quarters of the boys determine on open rebellion, it's time something was done. I don't blame them so much, but I thought Mr. Merriwell would approve of it if I informed him, and I want to stand as well as possible with him. If Bill Kane ever comes back to Bloomfield, I'm going to get into trouble. I'm dreading to see Kane turn up. Of course, he will sneak into town on the quiet, but that makes me all the more afraid of him."

Kane was a village boy who had been concerned in a plot to make money off the Farnham Hall lads who backed their own teams in the great three-cornered meet lately held on Farnham Field. By eavesdropping, Victor, a pretended friend of Kane, learned of this plot and attempted to blackmail the village "sport," with the result that Kane and a companion trapped Vic on the day of the meet, shut him up in an old

shanty, and left him there for hours, bound hand and foot and gagged. Vic finally succeeded in making his escape and appeared on Farnham Field just as the final events of the meet was being pulled off. He lost no time in reporting the matter to Merriwell, but Kane had seen him and promptly took flight.

The result of Victor's eavesdropping and final report to Merriwell was the barring of Jack Robinson, of Wellsburg, who had competed in a running match at Madison Square Garden, New York City, where, under a fictitious name, he had won a purse and made a record that established him as a professional. Nevertheless, in spite of his triumph as a professional, Robinson was defeated on Farnham Field by the Indian boy, young Joe Crowfoot. This defeat, taken in connection with his exposure, placed the Wellsburg boy in deep disgrace.

Although Wellsburg was sore on young Robinson, she was much more offended with Victor Maynard, who was regarded as a traitor of the most contemptible sort. Had Maynard made the discovery in an honorable manner and exposed the young professional from a sense of justice, it would have been different. But every one knew Victor had attempted blackmail and had finally made the exposure through a desire for revenge.

Nor was Maynard popular with the boys at Farnham Hall. Never in one single instance had he proved himself trustworthy and reliable. Naturally two-faced and treacherous, without the judgment to understand that his treachery would injure himself more than any one else, he had many times branded himself as a tattler.

This makes it clear why Frank Merriwell was disinclined to listen to Victor on this particular occasion.

It is possible also that Merriwell regarded the

threatened rebellion as a matter of small consequence. Be this as it may, he left Bloomfield on the noon train for the purpose of keeping his appointment.

As this was the intermission hour, both Diamond and Browning accompanied Frank to the station.

The time had come for Featherstone to carry out his scheme. In short order he mustered his forces, some seventy-six boys in all, and directly the door of the storeroom was opened by means of a skeleton key. Then these boys rushed in, seizing the tents and general camping outfit.

Sparkfair, his hands in his pockets, stood in front of Farnham Hall as Featherstone's crowd, burdened with the tents and camp utensils, gathered, preparatory to following their leader.

"Better join us, Spark," they called. "Come on, old man. It's a great lark, and we need you."

"Excuse me," smiled Dale. "For once in my life I think I'll keep my foot out of the mire. For once in my life I think I'll play the goody-goody little boy. Behold me now, the personification of innocence and virtue! Young men, I frown on you! Young men, I abhor you! Young men, you're very, very naughty! Shame! shame! Pooh-pooh for yours!"

"Well, wouldn't that make you sick!" cried Featherstone derisively.

"Look out, Feather, old general," warned Dale. "Something tells me you're the one who'll be sick first. A little bird whispers in my ear that you're going to be awfully sick, Feather. I'm sorry for you! Observe my tears. Will some one please loan me an onion so I can weep?"

"Oh, he thinks he's bright—he thinks he's witty!" mocked Sim Scrogg. "Isn't he the real funny thing! Isn't he a beauty!"

"Now, Sim, if I were in your place, I wouldn't even

mention that word beauty," said Spark remonstratingly. "Before you dillydally with that particular word, strike a pose in front of a full-length mirror and look at your own reflection. Honesty compels me to tell you the truth, Sim. You're no peacock. You're no bird of paradise."

In truth Scrogg was one of the homeliest boys at Farnham Hall. He had a scrawny neck, round shoulders, and an almost repugnant cast of countenance.

There was a clatter of iron and tinware, and Hiram Bemis, loaded with pots and pans, made his appearance and started to join the rebels.

But Sparkfair had seized the tall boy's arm.

"Don't listen to him, Bemis!" shouted several.

"One moment, Hi," called Spark.

"Cut it out, Hiram," he said earnestly. "You're chairman of the athletic committee. You've had a challenge from Dick Merriwell, who wants to get even for the defeat we administered to him at Fardale. You've written Merriwell, saying there is an open date Thursday. To-day is Tuesday. It's likely we'll have an answer to your letter before night. What if Merriwell accepts? What if he says he is ready to start with his team for Bloomfield? If he starts to-night and you're with the rebels, how are we going to head him off? If he brings his team here, and this rebellion amounts to anything, our team is going to be all broken up. I can see three of the regular players, besides yourself, with that bunch. You have duties to perform, Bemis, and it's up to you to set an example. This whole business is a farce. If the school was set against the new order of things, why didn't we get together and present our objections to Frank Merriwell in a decent, manly manner? A lot of hotheads have been led into this move by Featherstone, who is looking out for number one, you bet your loose change!

You know how well Feather has succeeded in his ambitions up to date. He thinks he's going to carry everything with a rush now, but I fancy he'll make the biggest fizzle imaginable. Take time to consider this thing soberly, old man. Let them go and think it over. If you want to join them later, you can do so."

Featherstone had grown impatient, and now he rushed up, seizing Dale by the shoulder and pushing him away.

"You let my man alone!" he cried harshly.

"Your man?" Spark mocked. "Do you hear that, boys?—you're Featherstone's men! Salute your leader. All glory to the great General Featherstone, leader of the rebellion!"

"If you don't shut up, I'll punch you!" threatened Guy savagely.

"Please do!" entreated Dale. "Nothing would give me more sublime happiness than to have you punch me!"

Young Joe Crowfoot had been standing back, and now he advanced and paused near at hand.

Featherstone gave the Indian boy a look.

"Oh, you're very bold, Sparkfair!" he hissed. "You know Crowfoot is here, ready to jump on me if I lift a hand."

"And you have seventy-five frisky warriors ready to jump on Crowfoot and me. You could wipe us off the map. But, if you're timid about Joseph, I'm sure the chief will retire and permit you to hit me on the jaw. Chief, in case this mighty warrior takes it into his head to give me a biff, you're not to interfere. I'll knock the stuffing out of him myself."

"Good!" grunted Crowfoot, turning his back and walking away.

"It's up to you, Feather," smiled Dale.

"I know what you want me to do!" rasped Guy. "You want to start a fight. You think that will spoil my plans. You think lots of the fellows who are kicking against the new order will stand by you in a fight. Oh, I'm onto you, Spark! I won't hit you now, but I'll see you later!"

"It's very likely," nodded Sparkfair. "I have a feeling myself that you'll see me later."

"Come, Bemis," urged Guy.

But, with a great clatter, the tall boy dropped the pots and pans to the ground.

"No, sir," he said; "I've changed my mind. I'm going to stay right here. You fellows can do anything you want to."

"Bah!" snarled Guy. "You're a soft thing! You're an easy mark! You let Sparkfair lead you round with a twine string!"

Having said this, he turned away, placed himself at the head of his followers, and cried:

"Ready, boys! Get together! Come on! Forward, march!"

The young rebels fell in behind their leader and went marching away toward Ripple Lake. Some one struck up a song, and they joined in the chorus.

"There's always great hilarity at the beginning of a rebellion," observed Dale, still smiling. "Warble on, my fine chaps! I have an idea you'll sing out of the other corner of your mouths before long."

CHAPTER XV.

PRISONERS OF WAR.

When Frank Merriwell returned he was not a little surprised to learn what had happened. Nevertheless, he betrayed no symptoms of concern over it.

Perhaps, more than anything else, he was surprised over the fact that Dale Sparkfair was not with the rebels. It was like Sparkfair to be concerned in such a wild piece of business, although, had he taken part in it, he would not have looked on it seriously. To him it would have been nothing more than a jolly lark.

Frank held a consultation with Diamond and Browning. After they left his private office he sent for Dale.

"How does it happen that you haven't joined these rebels, Sparkfair?" he asked, with a grave face, but a slight twinkle showing in his eyes.

"The rebellion got away from me, sir, before I was able to head it," answered Spark. "You see, Featherstone grasped the opportunity before I could throw myself into the gap."

"Well, you're honest, at least," said Frank. "Evidently you're in sympathy with the rebels?"

"No, I'm not."

"You're not?"

"No. I think they made a mistake for which they'll be sorry."

"I'm glad to hear you say that. Still, do you really believe these boys are serious in their revolt?"

"As serious as a lot of chaps like them can be. They don't like the prospect. They feel too strong to work."

"I wish to send word to them to return here at

once," said Frank. "I'm not expecting them to obey until I appear in person, yet I've decided the best way is to send them such an order. I've chosen you to carry my command to them."

"I'm glad you have!" cried Dale. "I wish you would trust me a little further."

"In what way?"

"I wish you would leave it to me to bring the whole bunch back here in my own way."

"Do you think you can do it?"

"I think I can."

"How are you going about it?"

"I haven't quite decided yet. I have an idea that Featherstone will mitten onto me the moment I show up. They've gone over on the eastern shore of the lake and are pitching the tents there. It's a sort of military camp, you see, and Featherstone is the general in command. He'll take me a prisoner of war if he gets a chance. He'll propose to have lots of fun with me."

"I hadn't considered that," said Frank. "Perhaps it would be best for you to keep away."

"Oh, not at all. He'll take me a prisoner, and that's just what I want him to do. I'd like permission to have Crowfoot accompany me. If Joe and I do not succeed in stampeding that bunch and send the whole of them chasing back here before nine to-night, I'll acknowledge myself a fizzle."

Frank could not help wondering how Dale was going about this work; yet, after brief meditation, he decided to let the boy try it.

"All right," he nodded, "go ahead and try your plan, whatever it is."

"Thank you," laughed Dale. "I'll get into gear as soon as possible."

Leaving Frank, Sparkfair went to his own room,

where for at least an hour he sat in deep thought, revolving in his mind a dozen schemes for accomplishing the work before him. As fast as one scheme was decided to be impractical he put it aside and began to meditate on another.

Finally Crowfoot entered the room and found Dale in a merry mood.

"Just the person I want to see, Joseph!" cried Spark. "I was going to look for you. We've work ahead of us—great work. We have been appointed as the emissaries of Frank Merriwell to invade the camp of the enemy and bring those chaps back to Farnham Hall in humble contrition. You may not understand what humble contrition means, Joseph, but it's nothing good to eat. We'll hand it out to the enemy. We'll surround them, Joseph, and capture them."

The Indian boy shook his head in a puzzled way.

"How you do that, Spark?" he asked. "Just we two? We no can surround so many."

"That was a figure of speech, chief. Don't mind me if I use such figures."

"We make figures on paper, on blackboard. I no see how we make figures when we talk."

"It'll be clear to you in time, my noble warrior. You'll understand it all when you get onto the curves of the English language. By the way, Joe, the English language, as practiced to-day, is full of curves, and shoots, and benders. Joe, you and I are going over to the enemy's camp. They'll gleefully take us prisoners of war. I can see them in my mind's eye. By the way, that's another figure of speech. They'll chortle with glee over our folly in walking into such a trap. They may do the scalp dance around you, my noble warrior. They may even threaten your topknot. Be not afraid. They're a bunch of bluffers, and you and I are going to call their bluff."

"What we do, Dale?"

"I've got the whole plan in my little noddle. Before we start I'm going to call on Doctor Schnitzle and have a little private confab with him. On our way over to the enemy's camp I'll tell you exactly what we propose to do."

Dale found Doctor Schnitzle and was closeted with him for about half an hour. When Sparkfair left, the German doctor was laughing so heartily that his sides fairly shook.

"You peen a great boy, Spark," said Schnitzle, patting him on the back. "Dot vos a fine experimentation you vos apout to did. Yah! Der medicine I haf givt you vill dood the vork, and I vill be alretty soon to look afder dose patients vot I oxpect to haf. It vill kept me very business this evening. Yah!"

"Yah," said Dale, also laughing. "If you were only going to get two dollars apiece from every patient you'll have this evening, you'd make a good thing, doc. Can't we fix it up that way? Can't you charge them the regular price for your services and divvy the boodle with me? I'm in need of a spring overcoat."

"Oh, you vos a pad vun!" cried Schnitzle, shaking his head. "Py chiminy! I pelieve you vould took dot money if you coot got him."

"Why not?" said Dale innocently. "Wouldn't it be a good piece of business?"

"Go avay by yourself now," commanded Schnitzle, waving his hand. "Go ahead and dood the vork. I vill took a rest in preparation for my part of him. I vill sleep mineself a little nap this afternoon. Yah!"

Between four and five o'clock that afternoon Sparkfair and Crowfoot approached the camping ground of the rebels on the eastern shore of the lake. As they drew near they found the boys busy arranging things at the camp, all of the tents having been pitched. It

was a picturesque spot, and the group of tents added to the attractiveness of the view. A number of camp fires had been built, and from these the gray smoke was rising through the treetops. Near at hand Ripple Lake lay placid and serene.

Near one of the fires a group of boys were playing cards. At Farnham Hall card playing was not permitted, but these fellows had promptly improved the occasion to enjoy themselves at it.

Dale and Joe paused and looked the camp over. In spite of the fact that several sentries had been posted by Featherstone, the Indian lad and his companion had succeeded in approaching without attracting attention or causing alarm.

Featherstone was seen strutting around in a pompous way, giving orders like one having supreme authority. It was Feather who first espied the outsiders. In a moment he uttered a shout and called attention to the two boys, who immediately advanced in the most unconcerned manner.

"Here, you fellows!" roared Featherstone. "You're a fine lot of sentries to let two of the enemy sneak in on us like this! Are you all asleep?"

"Don't agitate yourself so much, General Featherstone," laughed Dale. "Your sentinels are too busy having fun to really act as guard. General, we give you the high sign. We're representatives from the master of Camp Farnham Hall, who will pay his respects to you later. We have instructions to command you to break camp without delay and return to the Hall. This is official, and it comes from Mr. Merriwell."

"You go back and tell him we'll obey when he alters that obnoxious rule about manual labor. No, hold on. You needn't go back at all. Come on, boys, grab

these chaps! Don't let them get away! They'll provide a great deal of amusement for us."

"Be careful, general!" warned Dale, as he took a white handkerchief from his pocket and waved it in the air. "Notice we're under a flag of truce. According to the rules of warfare, you can't take us prisoners."

"Oh, hang the rules of warfare! You didn't come here under the flag of truce, anyhow! You're spies! You know what happens to spies!"

"That's right, they're spies! they're spies!" shouted a number of the boys.

"Death to spies!" piped Bob Bubbs fiercely. "I'm sorry for you, Sparkfair, but I think we'll have to hang you."

Dale and Joe were now seized and hurried to a tent, into which they were thrust. Following this, Featherstone posted a number of boys around the tent as a guard, warning them that they would be held responsible for the prisoners.

When this was done, Guy stood at the open flap of the tent and mockingly surveyed the captives.

"You've had lots of fun with me in the past, Sparkfair," he said; "now I'm going to have my turn at it. We are rebels against work. You love work—you and Crowfoot! Well, we'll see that you have plenty of work to do. It delights your heart to think of being a chambermaid or a kitchen scullion or something of that sort. You'll have a chance to practice it a while right here in Camp Featherstone."

CHAPTER XVI.

A CAPTIVE COOK.

Much to Featherstone's surprise, Dale seemed very humble and submissive.

"I'm afraid you'll be sorry over this business, Feather," he said, in a somewhat doleful tone of voice, pulling a long face. "You have no right to do what you're doing."

Crowfoot sat on the ground, with his legs crossed, and seemed to have nothing to say. He, too, looked surprisingly humble and downcast.

All this gave Featherstone a rapidly growing feeling of elation and power. Often had he longed to get the best of this chap, Sparkfair, in some manner. At one time he had been Dale's bitter enemy, and he could not forget the day when, after successfully trapping Spark, with the intention of giving him a "good thumping," the then new boy proceeded to whip Feather and five of his companions. For a long time Featherstone had smarted beneath the shame of that thrashing. Again and again he had endeavored to retaliate, only to have the tables turned on him by Sparkfair and be further humiliated.

At last Guy's spirit seemed somewhat broken, as he ceased his plotting to bring about the downfall of the boy he hated. Not only that, but he did something which surprised himself, for, having been beaten in his struggle to become captain of the nine, he had vowed he would never play under Sparkfair, yet in the end he did play under Sparkfair, and he fairly excelled himself on the diamond.

All his life up to the time of his first meeting with

Dale, Featherstone had been a leader among the boys with whom he associated. The superiority of Spark he finally acknowledged by his submission, although he never acknowledged it by word of mouth.

Now, for the first time, Spark was on the unpopular side of Farnham Hall. For the first time since the ascendancy of his star that star seemed dimmed by clouds which threatened to wholly obscure it.

"I don't want to hurt you, Sparkfair," said Featherstone boastfully. "That's why I've warned you not to try to get away. If you try that, the fellows will use you rough."

"Then I won't try it," said Dale meekly.

"The chap hasn't much real spirit when he's fairly down," thought Guy. "He's one of the kind who puts on a great front as long as he knows the crowd is with him."

With a gesture of contempt, Featherstone turned away.

Sparkfair winked at Crowfoot in such a comical manner that a slow smile overspread the Indian boy's features.

"I'm awfully sorry we came here, chief," said Dale, in a tone of great dolefulness. "I hope Mr. Merriwell doesn't let us stay here long. I hope he comes and takes us away."

"He no come," grunted Joe. "He say he let us bring boys back."

"But we've failed, Joe—we've failed. They won't go back. They won't listen to reason. And Mr. Merriwell is so indignant that he threatens to let them stay here until they get starved out. That means that we're in for it, chief. We'll have to remain captives of war in the hands of these bad boys."

With a puzzled expression Joe started to say some-

thing, but, quick as a flash, Dale made a signal that checked him.

"You can't lie, chief," whispered Spark. "Let me do the lying. Some of them are listening."

Again Crowfoot smiled slightly.

"What's that I hear you say sometimes, Spark?" he asked. "No use to cry over spilled milk. That pretty good thing to say. We no cry over spilled milk. We come here to do our duty. If we have to stay, we stay."

"But they've threatened to make us work, Joe."

"Mebbe we have to work."

"But I don't like it. It goes against my grain."

"Your grain? You mean it goes against your oats?" questioned the Indian boy.

"Well, it makes me feel like I hadn't had any oats for a long time. I'm afraid Featherstone is going to carry this thing through with a high hand. All the boys seem to think he's the real thing now."

"Most all," corrected the Indian lad. "Some nc run away from Farnham Hall. Some stay."

"But only a few of them. And Friday we may have to play Dick Merriwell's baseball team. Good gracious! how are we going to play if we are prisoners of war?"

"Joe he no puzzle him head over that," grunted the redskin, stretching himself at full length on the ground. "If he have to work bimeby, he take it easy now. You better do same."

"I can't!" groaned Dale. "I'm so distressed! I'm so worried! I'm so upset! Don't mind me, chief. Don't mind these few pearly tears. You're an Indian and you never cry, but it does me good sometimes to have a jolly cry."

Bob Bubbs appeared at the front of the tent, an expression of astonishment on his face.

"Is that you, Sparkfair, I've heard talking?" he asked.

"My goodness! I didn't know any one was listening," fibbed Dale.

"Well, you're certainly about the most changed chap I ever saw," declared Bubbs, with unusual seriousness. "For Heaven's sake! don't take it to heart so much. You'll live through it, even if I did suggest the possibility that you would be hanged."

With this bit of consolation, Towser departed.

Later Featherstone and three or four other boys appeared and commanded Dale and Joe to come forth.

"Peel off your jackets, roll up your sleeves, and prepare to perform real work," ordered Guy. "You love it so much, it'll be a pleasure for you. Here are a couple of axes. Get out here and chop some wood. We want plenty of wood. Stir up these fires, and by the time you have that done we'll let you take your hand at something else. Can you make coffee, either one of you?"

"Oh, I make the loveliest coffee!" cried Dale, clapping his hands. "Just let me make you some coffee, Feather. It will be nectar fit for the gods."

"You'll have a chance to produce some of that nectar," chuckled Guy. "Now hurry up about cutting that wood and fix the fires."

Without a word of protest, Dale and Joe took the axes and did as they had been ordered. Nor did they seem to mind when a dozen or more laughing boys gathered around and watched them wield the axes, all the while making sarcastic comments and observations.

"He swings an ax like an old woman!" sneered Oliver Slick, grinning at Dale.

"An old woman?" said Sim Scrogg. "That's just about what he is."

"Look out, Injun, or you'll cut your feet off," came from Abe Bunderson.

With his chest thrown out, Featherstone came strutting up.

"Here, you fellows," he laughed, "don't be interfering with the slaves. Let them work. Work was made for slaves."

Usually in such a situation Sparkfair would have been quick enough to retort in pointed language, but now not a word came from his lips, although he gave some of the boys a sad and mournful glance.

In due time enough wood was cut, and the two captives proceeded to feed the various fires. Next they were instructed to bring forth a number of coffee-pots from a certain tent, and Dale set about making the coffee, while Crowfoot spread blankets on the ground as tablecloths and arranged tin dishes and canned food on these various blankets.

All the while Featherstone strutted around, now and then ordering the "slaves" to hustle faster.

It was growing dusky in the grove and night was at hand.

"Is this real good coffee, sir?" humbly asked Spark, as he poured some from a can and smelled of it. "Seems to me it smells of chicory. You know too much chicory makes coffee bitter. I hope the coffee I brew won't be bitter."

"Oh, but you're such an expert at it!" laughed Featherstone. "Of course, it will be delicious."

"I hope it will, but you can't make really delicious coffee out of chicory, you know."

"Well, don't spend time worrying about it. We're all hungry. When the coffee is done we'll permit you to pour it. Then you may wait on us while we eat. You may have the pleasure of seeing us eat."

"Aren't you going to let us have anything to eat?" asked Dale anxiously.

"Oh, we'll leave you a few crumbs. You may have the leavings."

"Thank you, sir."

"By Jove! I'd like to kick him!" thought Feather.

Finally the coffee was prepared, and everything was ready. With an air of great consideration and a yearning desire to please, Sparkfair hustled about with the various coffeepots, pouring the dark liquid into the tin mugs which served as cups.

Already Featherstone had called his followers to assemble for "mess." They sat on the ground in a number of groups, laughing and joking as they began to eat.

"Here, Injun," cried one, "shove the butter over this way."

"Butter he strong enough to come himself," muttered Joe, although he obeyed the command.

"Wow! wow!" barked Bubbs suddenly. "Is this coffee? Is that 'nectar fit for the gods'? Why, hang it! I believe it has taken all the enamel off my teeth! Chuck the condensed milk at me, Sparkfair, and let me add a little more to this nectar. Bring me some hot water. I've got to dilute it."

"It must be the chicory," murmured Dale. "If it isn't fine coffee, I'm awfully sorry, but I know I'm not to blame. I know I made it correctly."

"Well, it's hot, anyhow," said Marl Netterby, as he drank heartily of the stuff.

"There's plenty of it," assured Dale. "Let me fill your cup again, sir—please do."

A few of the boys were disinclined to drink coffee, but Sparkfair urged these to try a little of it and finally persuaded the most of them to do so.

It was a great lark for Featherstone and his fol-

lowers. No wonder they grew more and more hilarious as Sparkfair and Crowfoot danced about from group to group, obeying orders like well-trained waiters.

Before the meal was finished Sim Scrogg arose with a peculiar expression on his face, pressing his hands to the pit of his stomach.

"Fellers, I don't feel just right," he said. "Something makes me sick. I wonder what it is?"

"Coffee!" shouted half a dozen voices. "It's Sparkfair's nectar!"

None of them, however, entertained a premonition of what was soon to follow. For it was not long before Scrogg's example was followed by Marl Netterby, who looked strangely pale and agitated.

"Ginger!" groaned Netterby. "I believe there was something besides chicory in that coffee! My stomach is trying to turn back handsprings."

"I'm feeling queer myself," confessed Abe Bunderson.

"So am I! so am I!" came from several others.

Featherstone persisted for some time in declaring that he was all right, but finally he also acknowledged that there were queer sensations in his stomach.

Suddenly Scrogg uttered a yell, fell on the ground, and commenced to roll and writhe in a way that plainly denoted great distress.

"I'm poisoned!" he gasped; "I know I'm poisoned!"

This frightened some of the others, and it was not long before several were in fully as bad shape as Scrogg.

Featherstone snarled at Sparkfair.

"What did you put into that coffee?" he demanded.

"I told you I feared there was chicory in it," said Dale.

"It's something worse than chicory!" groaned Guy. "Oh, jingoes! I'm getting sick! Oh, murder! I'm feeling bad! Things are beginning to go round, and I can't see straight. Where's Sparkfair? Let me get my hands on Sparkfair!"

"Surely I've done my best for you," protested Dale.

"Wow! wow!" barked Bob Bubbs dismally. "I want my mamma! Will some one please tuck me in my little bed?"

"I wa'unt a doc-tor!" drawled Jake Lander, who had a blue ring around his lips, and whose eyes were bulging in a queer manner.

"A doctor! a doctor!" shouted several of the boys. "That's what we want! We must have a doctor quick, fellows! Sparkfair, run to the Hall and get Doctor Schnitzle!"

"I can't," declared Dale. "I'm a prisoner of war. I've been forbidden to leave this camp."

Featherstone was sitting on the ground, with his back against the bole of a tree and his head between his hands. Although he heard Dale's voice, his bleared eyes seemed unable to locate the speaker.

"You may go, Sparkfair," he said, in a feeble tone. "You'd better go at once. Tell—the doctor—that we're all—awfully sick."

"He's out of his head," said Dale. "His mind wanders. I can't obey the orders of a person who is temporarily deranged. If I go for Doctor Schnitzle, Featherstone will be angry with me when he recovers."

"No, I won't," protested Feather. "You're a good fellow, Spark. Spark, do you want to see us die? We're poisoned! There was something in that coffee that has poisoned us! We're all dying!"

"Tell you what I'm going to do!" huskily palpitated Marl Netterby, as he staggered to his feet. "I'm going to strike for the Hall and old Schnitzle as fast

as I can go! I'm afraid I won't have strength enough to get there."

"We're with you! We're going, too!" came from many of the boys.

Featherstone made no protest. Instead of that, he began beseeching some of them to help him rise.

"Don't leave me here to die alone!" he implored. "I'm pretty near gone now!"

"This is awful!" cried Sparkfair, in apparent great distress over the affair. "I won't leave you here to die, Feather. Come, Joe, we'll help him. Get hold of him. That's right. Get him by the collar and lift him gently."

Instead of lifting him gently, they snapped him to his feet with a jerk that brought a gasp from his lips. His head flew back and then bobbed forward, while his neck actually seemed to crack.

"You see how kind and gentle we are, Feather," said Dale. "I hope you won't forget it. I hope you'll remember my consideration for you."

"I will—if I live!" whispered Guy.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DOCTOR'S GAME.

As far as possible, Frank Merriwell carried on things at Farnham Hall during the latter part of the day as if nothing unusual had occurred. He declined to speak of the "rebellion" and seemed utterly to ignore the fact that nearly three-quarters of the boys had left the school and made a camp on the eastern shore of Ripple Lake.

Those who remained at the Hall were inclined to wonder at Merry's seeming indifference over the affair. In short, through no act or word did Merry appear to know that this rebellion had taken place—this, as far as the boys were concerned, with the exception of Sparkfair, whom he had taken into his confidence.

That evening, when the work of the day was over and the shadows began to gather, Frank, Bruce, and Jack Diamond walked out a short distance toward Ripple Lake. Pausing beneath a tree on a little hill, they were able to look across the lake and see the gleaming camp fires of the rebels.

"I'm afraid this matter is going to prove more serious than you seemed inclined to think, Frank," said Diamond.

"Possibly so," nodded Merry.

"I tell you what we'll have to do," growled Bruce. "We'll have to go over there and round that bunch up ourselves. Queer thing you trusted Sparkfair to bring those boys in, Frank."

"Does it seem queer to you?"

"It certainly does."

"How was Sparkfair going to do it?" questioned Jack.

"I don't know," admitted Merry. "All I know is that he seemed absolutely confident that he could accomplish the feat."

"Between you and me, Merry," said Browning, "you trusted this fellow, Sparkfair, a little more than I would. He's naturally an imp himself. Perhaps he was in this thing all the while."

"That's right," agreed Diamond; "it would be just like him to be behind the whole business. Probably he incited the revolt himself."

"It is possible," admitted Frank, "but I don't believe it. I don't think either of you understand Dale Sparkfair."

"I understand that he is a reckless rascal," rumbled Bruce. "He kicked up no end of trouble when he first came here."

"But you'll admit that he hasn't caused much trouble lately. He was a difficult boy to comprehend and no easy one to manage. That is, he would not have been easy for some persons to manage. The first day I talked with him I decided that ordinary methods would not do in his case. I realized that he was a practical joker and some of his jokes were of the hare-brained order. It was useless to place before Sparkfair a set of rules and tell him he must conform to those rules. I made up my mind that I'd find a way to handle him and have him obey the regulations and restrictions of the school. I set out deliberately to win his confidence, and I believe I succeeded. Before I succeeded he came near landing in the village lockup, and he cost me a mighty valuable horse, which I was obliged to shoot to save the boy's life. My next method was to make him one of my assistants."

"How do you mean?" questioned Browning.

"When young Joe came here the sentiment was strongly against him. I confided in Sparkfair. I told

how old Joe had placed the boy in my hands and I had pledged myself to teach the youngster to become a real man. I acknowledged to Sparkfair that I had a difficult task on my shoulders, and I asked him to aid me. Then I placed those two boys together as roommates. What followed has pleased me beyond measure, for Crowfoot took to Sparkfair, and Sparkfair has been most industrious and enthusiastic in his efforts to instruct the Indian boy. You can see what Crowfoot has done. He's a model chap, a splendid athlete, a good ball player, and he studies books all the spare time he gets. Now, I owe my success with Crowfoot to Dale Sparkfair. In truth, I cannot call it my success. It's Sparkfair's success."

"You always did know how to do such things, Merry," laughed Diamond. "You always were able to get any fellow to assist you in your plans."

"To this I attribute much of my success," confessed Frank. "Lots of things I've done I could not have done without the faithful, whole-souled assistance of friends true and tried, such as you two are."

As he uttered these final words he placed his right hand on Diamond's shoulder and his left on Browning's.

"Now," he added, "something tells me that I've made no mistake in trusting Sparkfair to-day."

"You still believe he'll be able to bring those fellows back to the Hall?" questioned Jack.

"Yes, I believe it, and, if I'm not mistaken, some of them are coming now. Look, there are two or three figures coming this way. Stand close to the tree trunk here. Let them pass."

Merry's keen eyes were not deceived. Through the gathering gloom came hurrying boy after boy, some of them running, some walking, and not a few staggering. They continued to pass at intervals, and the

trio beneath the tree heard many of them groaning and muttering incoherently.

"Well, what in thunder is the matter with them?" whispered Browning hoarsely. "The whole bunch must be loaded! Frank, they're jagged! See them stagger!"

"They may be jagged," said Merry, "but, if so, I'd like to know where they got their liquor."

"How many have passed?" asked Jack.

"I've counted over sixty," answered Frank. "Here come still others. Fellows, Sparkfair has kept his word. There's no question about that. I don't know how he did it, but he's certainly sent the rebels back to Farnham Hall."

A short time after this three persons passed close to the tree. Two of them were supporting the third between them. As they drew near Sparkfair's voice was heard and recognized.

"Hit it up a little faster, Featherstone, old pumpkin-head," he was saying. "Feather, you thought yourself bright, didn't you? Feather, you're the easiest mark alive! You'll realize it to-morrow. You were a proud and high-headed revolutionary leader, weren't you! You certainly did strut and put on airs to beat the band. The revolution is all over, Feather. Perhaps you haven't lost your head, as I prophesied, but you'll have to thank Doctor Schnitzle if he saves your life."

"You've poisoned me, Sparkfair!" huskily mumbled the boy in the middle.

At this Dale laughed heartily.

"You're not poisoned, old chump," he assured; "but you have swallowed a small potion of dope, and you're all to the bad."

His voice died out in the distance.

"Well, what do you think of that?" exclaimed Browning, in a guarded tone.

"Doesn't it strike you that my confidence was well placed?" laughed Frank.

"Yes. But this thing is a howling mystery. How did he do it? And what has he done?"

"I think he'll tell me later on," said Frank. "It's my belief that all the rebels are back at the Hall now. Let's see what's going on there."

In his office Doctor Schnitzle was very busy. That office was literally crowded with pale-faced, groaning, dejected boys, who were anxiously imploring the doctor to give them something that would make them feel better.

"Uf your cases I have made a diognosis," said the doctor coolly. "It vos a most peculiar affliction."

"What's the matter with us? What's the matter with us?" asked several.

"You haf chicoration the heart uf," answered the doctor. "It comes from coffee drinking in vich dere vos too much chicory."

"That's it! that's it!" they agreed. "Sparkfair said there was chicory in that coffee. Is it dangerous, doctor?"

"Oxtremely so," answered Schnitzle. "Uf you do not die, you vill lif. I pelief I haf here alretty on my table something dot vill hellup you uf it does you goot."

In the center of the table was a huge covered bowl. The doctor lifted the cover and showed that the contents of the bowl was some particularly nasty-looking, dark-colored liquid, almost as thick as molasses. Seizing a huge spoon, Schnitzle said:

"You vill now stood avay close to the front uf the table vile I demonstration the medicine. Don't all try to get up at vunce. You vill open your mouths alretty, vun at a time, and I vill spoon it into you. Holdt on! holdt on! Don't all open up at vunce. I can't gif

efry vun the first spoonful. Vait and see how the first vun likes his dose."

Dipping a brimming spoonful of the liquid from the bowl, Schnitzle thrust it into the mouth of the nearest boy, at the same time crying:

"Gullup it down! gullup it down! Let it swallow you quick!"

With a terribly wry face and a look of untold anguish, the boy "gulluped it down." Schnitzle wiped the spoon on the boy's hair.

"Next!" he cried. "Move along as fast as you got your pitters!"

"Oh, my soul!" groaned the boy who had taken the first dose. "That's awful, doctor! That's frightful! I believe I feel worse!"

"Got out of here!" snapped Schnitzle, motioning toward the door. "Berhaps you vill felt better before you die."

Having begun the work, the doctor ladled the stuff out with considerable dexterity, commanding each victim to "gullup it down." He was not at all careful in the manner in which he handled the spoon, for he wiped it across the boys' faces and on their hair after administering each dose.

"Get right avay to ped as soon as you can," he directed. "It vill gif an opportunity for the chicoration of the heart to subsist. Yah!"

It was a very sick and doleful bunch of boys who stumbled up the stairs to their rooms and rolled into bed that night.

Sparkfair and Crowfoot appeared escorting Featherstone.

"Do you think you can save them, doctor?" asked Dale.

"Safe them?" exclaimed Schnitzle. "I vill safe them or I vill kill them!"

"Well, here is the ringleader of the bunch. He's in dreadful shape. I was afraid he wouldn't survive to reach you. Better give him an extra dose."

"Yah," nodded the doctor. "I vill gif him four spoonfuls. He vos a nice, bretty poy, ain't he? Stood him up avay from the table. Mine gootness! he has got it pad! You can see vot a pad shape he is in by the white part of his eyeballs, vhich vos green. Holdt out your tongue, poy."

Feebly Featherstone held out his tongue.

"Gracious sakes alife!" said the doctor. "Dere vos an awful coat your tongue on. It vos almost a coat and a pair of bants."

"Well, give me some of that medicine before I die!" whimpered Guy.

"Oh, you vill got it! you vill got it!" nodded the doctor. "Don't you vurriness apoudt dot."

The first spoonful nearly choked Featherstone, but he swallowed it in spite of its nauseating taste.

"Vot peautiful hair!" said the doctor, as he seized Guy by the scalp lock and proceeded to polish the spoon.

"Have I got to take any more?" gasped Feather.

"Haf you got to took it?" snapped Schnitzle. "Vell, you pet my life you haf! It vos der only thing vot I can dood for you dot gifs me satisfaction. You vill took the next spoonful and gullup it down, same as the first. Then I vill poke a spoonful in your right ear, after which you vill haf to took vun in your left ear. It vos a desperate case, und I feel justification in resorting to such oxtremeness. Yah!"

When Schnitzle got through with Featherstone, Guy was a sight. No wonder Sparkfair burst into laughter he could not suppress and continued to laugh until he seemed to lose his breath. No wonder young Joe Crowfoot grinned broadly and chuckled softly.

Finally all the boys had been "cared for" by the considerate doctor and sent groaning to their rooms. As the last one departed, Schnitzle closed the door, sat down on a chair, clasped his hands over his fat stomach, and joined Dale in laughing heartily.

"Sparkfair," he finally said, "you vos a chim dandy! Dot stuff vich I gave you would not hurt dose poys a great deal, efen if it dit make them sick, but on my vord the medicine vot I gafe them vill make them apout ten times more sick as dey vos. Der repellion vos squelched, und you vos a conquering hero. Yah!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

WELL DONE!

Merriwell had refrained from visiting the doctor's office, although he was aware that something was taking place there. Browning was inclined to investigate, but Frank objected.

"I haven't recognized this rebellion," he said. "I have totally ignored it, and I propose to follow up that policy."

"Do you mean that you'll not reprimand these boys or punish them in any way?"

"Somehow I have an idea that they have been well punished," smiled Merry. "I shall send over Jumbo and Toots to take down those tents to-night and clear away all signs of the camp."

"I believe that is a good plan, Frank," said Diamond.

Some time later, while Merry was alone in his private office, there came a soft knock at the door. At the call to come in, Sparkfair entered.

"Well, Dale?" questioned Merry, swinging round on his office chair.

"Very well, sir," answered Spark. "I've come to report. The rebellion is over, and the rebels, although not dead, probably wish themselves so. They're all in their rooms, and there's no question but they'll stay there to-night."

"Tell me how you did it," smiled Frank.

"Why, I doped them. I went to Doctor Schnitzle and asked him for something I could put into their food or drink that would make them sick but would not hurt them. He finally furnished me with the stuff

I wanted, and, with that on my person, I walked over to the camp and permitted them to take me prisoner. Crowfoot accompanied me, and we had fun enough to last us a week. They mocked us because we loved work. They set us at work. They did the very thing I wanted them to do, for they ordered me to make the coffee. I put a little of the doctor's dope into each coffeepot, with the result that the whole bunch became sick as dogs after drinking the coffee. They thought they were poisoned, and it was not long before they were hustling to reach Doctor Schnitzle. The doctor was ready for them, and he gave them some more stuff which finished them up."

Frank indulged in a hearty burst of laughter.

"I owe you a great deal, Sparkfair," he said.

"Give me credit for it," smiled Dale. "I may need a balance account in my favor some day."

"You may go to bed now and sleep in the peaceful assurance of duty well performed."

"Oh, I'll sleep like a cherub, sir."

"I don't suppose you fear any trouble in case these boys suspect you dosed the coffee."

"Fear?" cried Dale, striking himself a blow on the chest and staggering. "Why, fear is a thing unknown to this heart. All those fellows are not chumps, Mr. Merriwell, and some of them are certain to suspect the truth. If they accuse me, I'll acknowledge it. At the same time, sir, I give you my word that I shall flatly tell them you had nothing to do with it. I want all the glory, you see."

"You're welcome to it," nodded Frank. "Good night, Sparkfair."

"Good night, sir."

Dale made a military salute and departed, going directly to his room.

"Chief," he cried, striking a pose before Crowfoot,

who was already there and studying a book, "we are the real stuff! We're the conquering heroes! We surrounded the enemy and took them into camp!"

"You do much good job with your make-um-sick stuff," said Joe agreeably.

This naturally stolid Indian lad was beginning to take on some of Sparkfair's pleasant ways of smiling and joking. On first coming to Farnham Hall Joe had seldom smiled and never laughed. Now he smiled frequently, and at rare intervals he laughed outright.

"Oh, yes, I'm clever," agreed Dale. "I'm the slickest article I know of. Notice that I'm very modest, too. I never boast about myself. Boasting is a most offensive thing, Joseph. Refrain from it on all occasions, my noble lad. Never boast, but blow your own horn every chance you get."

"I no have a horn to blow."

"Another figure of speech, chief. When will you ever get used to my poetical language? Sometimes you're inclined to talk in metaphor yourself, but you don't seem to appreciate the same when I resort to it. I never knew but one person who appreciated my metaphors. She was a pretty girl, and she always appreciated them. That is what I *met her for.*"

Joe shrugged his shoulders.

"What you call that?" he grunted.

"I call it a blamed pun," said Dale. "If you'd thrown the inkstand at my head, you'd have been justified. Chief, I'm aweary. I would close my little peepers in gentle slumber. I am soon to let down the silken-fringed curtains to the windows of my soul and depart to Nodland. Oh, how beautifully I talk! These heavenly blue eyes of mine need a siesta. Siesta is some kind of language for slumber, Joseph. Watch me peel."

Dale began undressing.

"Joe he study some if you no care," said Crowfoot. "He have little time before lights must be out."

"Study away, Joseph. Plug your head off. What are you studying now?"

"I read some history. It much fine. I read about Captain John Smith and how him get saved by Pocahontas. Heap good story, Dale."

"Oh, yes, that's a beautiful fairy tale, Joseph. I used to love that little story. As a kid I often dreamed that I was Captain John and the prettiest girl in town was Pocahontas. The only thing that spoiled the story was that Jonny didn't marry Poccy. He sort of shunted her off onto his best friend, Rolfe. That was dead wrong in John. Where are my pajamas? Oh, here they are. Watch me take a dive between those snow-white sheets. So long! Call me when the rooster crows so I may wake up and think how jolly it is that I can turn over and take another nap."

In less than half a minute after stretching himself in the bed Dale was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XIX.

ALL OVER.

At Farnham Hall the morning bell awakened many very sick and miserable boys. They did not want to get up. They groaned and growled at the sound of the bell. The only thing which gave them a real feeling of thankfulness was that they had not died during the night. In fact, many of them believed themselves too ill to get up and declined to do so until they were summoned by heavy knocking on their doors and stern commands to appear at roll call.

There was one, however, who positively refused to crawl out of bed.

It was Featherstone.

Oliver Slick, Guy's roommate, sat up and held his head between his hands, sighing dolefully.

"Come on, Feather," he urged; "we've got to turn out."

"I can't!" declared Guy, in a weak voice. "I can't move. I'm all in, Oily. Report for me. Say I'm dead to the world."

"I'll send the doctor up."

"Don't do it! If he offered me another spoonful of that nasty, sticky, vile-smelling stuff, I'd turn wrongside out."

"I say, Feather, our rebellion kind of blew up, didn't it? Are you going to quit? We can't do anything without you to lead us."

"Confound the rebellion! Don't mention it to me! That's what made all the trouble! If we hadn't gone over there by the lake, and——"

"Drank that coffee," put in Oliver.

"Oh! oh! Coffee!" groaned Feather. "Don't speak of it! Merciful stars! what was in that coffee?"

"Something that didn't belong there," said Slick, as he began dressing. "I tell you, Feather, I'm suspicious."

"Of what?"

"Sparkfair."

"You think——"

"I think he fixed that coffee, and I'm willing to bet on it. Now that ought to get you up. It ought to make you blazing mad."

"I'm too sick even to get mad," confessed Guy. "When I do get better I'll investigate this business. If I find out Sparkfair did anything, I'll——"

"Oh, you're a great chap to tell what you'll do!" sneered Slick. "You're always saying you're going to do something to Sparkfair, but when you try it you make a fizzle! I did think myself that you had a start on him yesterday, but here you are flat on your back, and I'll guarantee he'll be frisking around as fine as a fiddle this morning. Everything goes his way."

Slick was right about Sparkfair. Dale was up at an unusual hour, and he posted himself at the foot of the stairs, where he could see the boys as they came down. He greeted them all with expressions of great consideration for their health. Some of them answered with sickly grins. Some were sullen. And some did not answer at all.

Finally Bob Bubbs appeared.

Dale shook hands with him.

"Delighted!" he cried. "Delighted to see you in such fine shape this morning!"

"I am dead," said Bubbs. "I'm just walking around from habit. If I wasn't dead, I'd kill you, Sparkfair."

"Why so?" questioned Dale innocently.

"Oh, you didn't do a thing!" muttered Bubbs.

"Don't tell me! I know you were behind it. They say you've finished Featherstone. Slick says Feather can't lift his head off the pillow."

"There's lots of fellers goin' to lay this up against you, Spark!" rasped Sim Scroggs, showing up. "You've spoiled their fun and had lots of fun yourself, but you're goin' to find that you ain't so pop'lar as you was."

"Now I hope you're wrong—I sincerely hope you're wrong. I should regret to see the school divided by a feud of any sort. I should hate to have hard feelings creep in and ruin the spirit of good-fellowship and loyalty that has existed. What could we do when we have to face our enemies on the field of battle?"

"And, by gum! we've gut to face 'em to-morrer," said Hi Bemis, who came along, fishing in his pockets. "Here's Dick Merriwell's message, sayin' he'll be here to-day with the Fardale team. Now, won't the school be in fine shape to play baseball to-morrow!"

"Doctor Schnitzle has given me the assurance that every man we need will be all right to-morrow, regardless of anything that has happened," said Dale.

"Well, maybe you don't need us," said Bubbs. "Maybe you can get along without a few of us. Perhaps you don't need Netterby or Lander."

"We need every good man we have," answered Dale. "Before you chaps started out on that foolish rebellion you didn't stop to consider that Fardale would be here to-morrow. With the school divided and half the ball players in rebellion against the authority here, how were we going to get together to meet Fardale?"

"They might have patched it up," said Scroggs. "Perhaps Mr. Merriwell would have made some sort of an agreement with them fellers."

"Now you ought to know better, Scroggs. You

ought to know by this time that you can't have your own way in defiance of Frank Merriwell. You've still got something to learn. Bubbs is going to play ball to-morrow. So will Netterby and Lander."

"They'll be in fine shape, won't they?" sneered Scroggs. "They'll be able to put up a brilliant game, won't they! Here we are, champions of the county, and we've got to go against Fardale with a knocked-out team. They've beat us once, and we've beat them once. This will be the decisive game between Fardale and Farnham Hall."

"That's right," nodded Spark; "and we're going to play the game of our lives, fellows."

At this point a boy came rushing up and informed them that all Doctor Schnitzle's patients of the previous evening were ordered to appear before him again ere eating breakfast.

Bubbs staggered, and clasped both hands to his stomach.

"Me to the woods!" he exclaimed. "Snitz is going to give us some more of that medicine! It'll finish every one of us!"

"Take my advice, and go straight to the doctor's office," said Dale. "I fancy he'll give you something that will bring you round into shape. Come on, now."

He seized Bob's arm on one side, telling Scroggs to take the other arm. Between them the little chap was trotted straight to the doctor's office.

As they entered they heard a clamor of voices, and found more than a dozen boys surrounding the doctor and literally begging him not to give them any of the medicine previously administered.

Schnitzle was rubbing his hands and peering at them from beneath his spectacles, which had been thrust up onto his forehead.

"You vill all thank my lucky stars dot you peen alive

dis morning," he said. "If I hat not gift you dot medicine, where do I suppose you would pe now? Vosn't you alife? Answer me dot. Vosn't you here? Vell, you ought to go upon your knees und thank me for dot. Didn't I tolt you dot you vould lif uf you did not die? Now, don't come arount here and insult me py inswinuatin' dot my pizness does not know me. I vos a coot doctor. I vos der only doctor dot knows oxactly vot to do ven a patient gets dot chicoration der heart uf. Dere vos only one kindt of medicine dot vill cure him right avay uf it don't kill him. It vos a simple remedy. You took some sulphur and some molasses and some good hens' eggs dot haf peen laid apout seven months, and you mix them together mit a leedle lobelia tea. Oh, it vos fine—it vos fine! It doods the vurk. Just see how well it didded it for you."

"Sulphur and molasses!" groaned one boy, gagging.

"Hens' eggs seven months old!" gasped another.

"And lobelia tea!" came huskily from a third.

"Wonder that didn't finish us!" said a fourth.

"It dit finish you. You vos finished alretty yet," said Schnitzle, gesticulating with his short arms. "Don't complain to me dot you vos not finished yet. Vot I vill gif you dese mornin' vill make you feel so much petter dot you vill not know myself. You vill haf a coot appetite your breakfast for, and after breakfast you vill pe as fresh as a bunch of kittens. Yah!"

Although the boys were still suspicious, the doctor made each one take a small spoonful of a colorless liquid, which had very little taste.

After leaving the office, Bob Bubbs exploded in wrathful resentment:

"Hanged if I don't believe that doctor made us sicker than we were with his old medicine last night!

Maybe we'd got over that other business if we hadn't taken any of his stuff! I think, by jiminy, that it was his stuff that made us sick!"

"You're right," said Dale, who had followed them, "it was Doctor Schnitzle's stuff that made you sick. There's no question about that."

And neither Scroggs nor Bubbs understood the full significance of Sparkfair's words.

At roll call Featherstone was the only boy who did not answer to his name.

During breakfast the boys guardedly speculated on the possible punishment in store for them because of their rebellion. All who sought it were excused from early morning exercise, and no questions were asked them.

"Oh, I see where we're going to get it when we face Mr. Merriwell!" muttered Bolivar Jones, his big head wagging weakly.

"Wha-ut do you sup-pose he'll do to us?" questioned Jake Lander.

"Oh, he'll haul us over the coals, all right, all right," asserted Walter Shackleton. "The very fact that he hasn't done anything thus far makes me dread what's coming. Wait till we get into the lecture room, fellows!"

At the fixed hour for the morning lecture the boys assembled as usual in the big room, and most of the humbled rebels wore a look of great anxiety. Those who had not taken part in the rebellion were inclined to chuckle at the others, but all became grave and attentive as Merriwell entered and mounted the platform.

"Good morning, boys," said Frank, as he stood beside the desk and looked them over. "I'm pleased to see you looking so well this fine morning. It's a glorious day outside. There's plenty of sunshine and

good fresh air. The early part of the day is the best for open-air exercise, the topic on which I shall speak this morning. It seems a little bit hard to keep so many of you here when you might be out taking the exercises that are most beneficial to you. That being the case, I shall make my lecture very brief."

Then, without the slightest reference to the events of the previous afternoon, Frank began his lecture. He talked barely fifteen minutes, and he had the closest attention of every hearer. Those who fancied he would finish the lecture with a reprimand for the rebellious ones were surprised when he announced that he was through and they were dismissed.

"Well, what do you think, boys?" questioned Walter Shackleton, as he filed out with the others. "Is he holding off to soak us all the harder by and by?"

"I don't believe he is," said Marl Netterby. "I don't believe he's even going to mention it. He ignores it. By George, boys, it makes me feel ashamed of myself! We had no right to do what we did! It was a fool trick!"

Immediately a dozen boys agreed with Netterby.

Outside a group of the humbled rebels collected and talked matters over.

Berlin Brooks was in the midst of that group.

"Fellows," said Berlin, "we're a lot of chumps. It's up to us to acknowledge our mistake and ask pardon. One or two of us shouldn't do this. We want to do it all together, so Mr. Merriwell will understand there isn't any faking about our change of heart. What do you say to that?"

One and all, they agreed with him.

Thus it happened that when Frank Merriwell appeared on the steps a few moments later those boys surrounded the steps and pushed Brooks forward as spokesman.

Cap in hand, Berlin began in his humblest manner: "Mr. Merriwell, you see before you a bunch of the biggest chumps that ever walked around on two legs. We all know it, and we're feeling too ashamed to look at our own reflections in a mirror. What we did yesterday was——"

"A matter we will not speak of to-day," interrupted Frank. "It's past. I think you all understand that whatever I require you to do while at Farnham Hall I believe to be for your good without the slightest qualification. I'll not ask anything of any boy that I even suspect will harm him in the slightest degree. Not only that, but I shall not ask the performance of any duty that I do not believe will be beneficial to the boy who does that duty. Now, go on about your work and your sports. And don't forget that Farnham Hall plays Fardale here to-morrow. Let's all be loyal and true to Farnham Hall."

This brief speech was greeted by a hearty cheer, and even the spirit of rebellion was dead.

CHAPTER XX.

LINING UP.

The Fardale team arrived on the afternoon train, and was given a hearty reception by a delegation of Farnham Hall boys.

"We welcome you!" cried Sparkfair, as he clasped Dick Merriwell's hand. "We welcome you with great glee to your doom! We're not going to do a thing to you to-morrow!"

"I don't think you are," laughed Dick.

"Are you aware that we're the champions of this county?" demanded Dale, his blue eyes twinkling.

"And are you aware that we still hold the interscholastic in our section?" questioned Dick. "Evidently it's going to be a clash between champions."

From the station to Farnham Hall the visitors marched, escorted by Sparkfair and his companions.

Frank was waiting, and he greeted his brother with a light of affection in his eyes.

"We've made all arrangements for you to stop here at the Hall, boys," he said. "Make yourselves at home. The gymnasium, the reading room, and the field are open to you. You shouldn't have trouble in passing away the time."

"I opine not," said Buckhart, as Frank shook hands with him. "Great horn spoon! but things look a whole lot fine around here. If I wasn't in Fardale, I'd put it up to my father to give me a course of sprouts at Farnham Hall."

"I shall monopolize you to-night, Dick," said Frank, after he greeted all the visitors in turn. "I think the boys can get along without you one evening. You'll come over to the house with me."

Needless to say, Dick Merriwell spent a pleasant evening with his brother, and laughed himself almost sick at the story of the rebellion so neatly nipped in the bud by Spark's clever tactics.

During the following forenoon the visitors found plenty of sport at Farnham Hall, and both teams were in the finest condition as the hour for the great game finally drew near.

Although no advertising of any sort had been done, the people of Bloomfield and surrounding towns learned that the game was to take place, and there was a great rush to see it. Both Pittston and Wellsburg sent over delegates. Jack Cooley, captain of the Wellsburg team, headed the delegation from that city.

As the local team took the field for practise, Cooley shouted from the seats:

"We're sorry for you, Sparkfair, but we couldn't stay away! We had to come over to see you get your trimming!"

"It would be too bad if you should meet a disappointment," laughed Dale.

"That's jest what he will, by chowder!" cried Uncle Eb Small, rising to his feet and flourishing his crooked cane. "We've gut the champions right here in Bloomfield, and there can't nobody take the title away from them!"

"That's right, Eben—that's right!" agreed Eli Given, who was at Uncle Eb's side. "It would tickle them Wellsburg fellers most to death to see us git beat, but they'll never have a chance to git tickled any to-day."

"Hello, you two old sports!" chuckled Cooley, waving his hand. "Where's your partner—where's Deacon Hewett?"

"There he is right up there with his wife," answered

Uncle Eb. "She makes him take her to all the games now."

Mrs. Hewett flushed as the attention of the smiling crowd was drawn to her.

"Don't mind 'em, Mirandy," whispered the deacon. "They don't mean no harm."

"Oh, I don't mind so much," she answered. "I used to think they was nuthin' but common loafers, but lately since we've gut our new minister they've taken to comin' to church every Sunday. I guess mebbe they're not so bad."

"Well, you can thank Frank Merriwell for that," said Elnathan. "I heard him tell Uncle Eb myself that it was the duty of every respectable citizen, whether he was a church member or not, to attend church at least once on the Sabbath day. Folks used to say that this Merriwell was bringing a spirit of wickedness into our town, but I want you to notice the difference at church on Sundays. Why, when Asaph Drypatch used to expound the doctrine for us, sometimes we didn't have more than a baker's dozen to hear him. Now every Sunday the church is plumb packed to the doors, and when Deacon Crabtree and I pass the plate round we git such amazin' contributions that it makes our eyes bag out. I tell ye, Mirandy, the church is prosperin'! We've cleared that debt. We've gi'en her a co't of paint. And we're goin' to fix up the steeple and put in a new bell. If these are signs of wickedness, we'd better have some more of the same kind of wickedness in Bloomfield. Even Jeremiah Crabtree has gut his mouth closed, and he don't say nuthin' more 'bout Frank Merriwell ruinin' Bloomfield and makin' the place unregenerate and sinful."

Mrs. Hewett placed a hand on the deacon's wrist.

"Elnathan," she said softly, "if you git awfully interested in the game, and you want to go down there

with Eben and Eli, I'll let ye go. I know sometimes you can't hardly set still. I kinder guess I understand how you feel. As long as you take me to the game and take me home afterward I won't keep you here tied up to my side."

"That's mighty good of you, Mirandy—mighty good," said the deacon. "I do git kinder nervous and excited and feel like hollerin' and movin' round. You know boys will be boys, and it's a fact that lately I've felt more like a boy than at any time in the last thutty year. Between you and me, Mirandy, we're gittin' along better than we used to when I was allus so stiff and sot in my convictions. We don't have so many disagreements and hard feelin's."

"I realize it," she said, "and I'm inclined to believe that even this we owe to Frank Merriwell and the new feeling of good-fellowship which he seems to scatter everywhere."

"Oh, woo! woo!" cried the deacon excitedly. "Did you see that ketch? Did you see that tall feller gaffle to that ball with one hand? Say, Mirandy, he's a rippin' good fielder."

Then the deacon lifted his voice and shouted:

"Don't none of you Fardale fellers want to biff 'em out where that chap can reach 'em to-day! He jest eats 'em up!"

Dick Merriwell laughed heartily.

"If we only had a few veteran rooters at home like these here, I'd like it, fellows," he said.

The home team had finished practice and had given the field to the visitors when Guy Featherstone, unaccompanied by a single companion, made his appearance and approached the Farnham bench. Feather's face wore a sour and sneering expression. He was not in uniform.

"I suppose you chaps are going to play a great game

to-day," he observed derisively. "I suppose Sparkfair is going to pitch the whole game. I hope they don't bat him out of the box the way Pittston did. Of course, you don't need me, with such a good man as Spark to do all the twirling."

Dale turned sharply on Guy.

"Look here, Feather," he said, "I asked you to come out in uniform. I asked you to be on the bench to relieve me in case I do get my bumps. You declined to come."

"You bet your life I did!" snapped Featherstone. "Perhaps you can fill some fellows up with poison and have them tag round after you without ever resenting it a bit, but you'll find I'm not that kind. Here are Bubbs, Netterby, Lander, and Brooks all ready to go out there and do their best for you just the same as if nothing had happened. They ought to soak you. They ought to throw you down."

"You show your true nature now, Feather," said Dale. "Once on a time I told you that you were a quitter, but afterward I fancied I might have been too harsh. I think I made no mistake."

Guy's face flamed.

"I'm no fool, that's the matter!" he snapped. "Come, Bubbs, Netterby, Lander, and Brooks, are you going to make fools of yourselves?"

Dale stepped squarely in front of Featherstone.

"See here," he said, in a very low tone, "if you want to get on the bleachers and root against Farnham Hall, go ahead and do so. Show yourself up, but don't come here trying to create a feeling of dissension in the team. You don't belong here. You're not in uniform, and you have no right near this bench. Frank Merriwell is present, and I think you'd better step back."

"All right, I'll step back," muttered the bitter-

hearted boy. "I know you'd like to have Merriwell order me back before all the crowd, and I'll not give you that pleasure. But let me tell you what's going to happen. You're going to be beaten to-day, and you'll get it good and plenty. Perhaps you think Frank Merriwell wants to see you win. You must be a chump! Isn't his brother going to pitch for Fardale? All this talk about the Farnham Hall spirit is rot in a game like this. Even Frank Merriwell himself hasn't any real Farnham Hall spirit."

"Go tell him so, and see what happens," invited Dale, as Guy turned away.

In a short time the visiting team finished practice, and the umpire stepped out toward the home plate.

The time had come for the great clash to take place. Farnham Hall trotted onto the field, and Fardale went to bat.

The batting order of the two teams follows:

FARDALE.	FARNHAM HALL.
Gardner, ss.	Bubbs, ss.
Darrell, 2d b.	Netterby, 3d b.
Black, lf.	Bemis, lf.
Merriwell, p.	Sparkfair, p.
Jolliby, cf.	Lander, rf.
Singleton, 1st b.	Hollis, 2d b.
Buckhart, c.	Brooks, 1st b.
Bradley, 3d b.	Crowfoot, c.
Tubbs, rf.	Barking, cf.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OPENING INNING.

"Now, boys," said Dick Merriwell, "we've got to win this game. My brother thinks he has a team here that can do us up to-day. He told me so frankly."

"How cuc-cuc-cuc-could Frank sus-sus-sus-say anything that was not frank?" asked Jolliby, with a grin.

"Get serious, Chip," directed Dick. "I'm talking to you fellows now. There'll be no fooling in this game. When my brother tells me he thinks he has a team that can beat Fardale it means danger with a capital D. All the same, we mustn't get too anxious. Too much anxiety is as bad as too much carelessness. Let every man play with confidence, and don't get rattled when an error is made. The team that refuses to get rattled and nerved up over an error or two or because the enemy hits a little batting streak has a good chance to win. Stick to your team work in everything. Play together. Try no haphazard business. Every man should know just what he must do, and just what his teammates will attempt to do on every play. Take plenty of chances when necessary, but don't get foolish. Now, come on, Earl, start us off."

"Batter up!" cried the umpire.

Grave-faced, ruddy-cheeked, and handsome, Earl Gardner walked into the batters' box.

"Here's the northern spy, that apple-cheeked boy from Maine!" barked Bob Bubbs, dancing about and clapping his hands briskly. "He's so far away from home! Be easy with him, Spark—be easy!"

"Yes, don't do a thing to him, Spark!" came from Netterby.

"Give him a look at the ball!" called Hollis.

"Don't hit him! don't hit him!" rumbled Brooks.

"Don't be so blooming selfish, Dale," came from Barking. "Let the outfielders have a little something to do to-day, old boy."

"When you nee'ud me, wake me uh-up," called Jake Lander, from right field.

"See, Spark," said Joe Crowfoot, holding up the big catching mitt, "put it there. Put it in the pocket, Spark."

Smilingly Dale delivered the first ball, whistling it over the inside corner of the plate with a sharp shoot.

Gardner fell back a bit and let it pass.

"One strike!" cried the umpire.

"Oh! oh! oh! He can't see it! he can't see it!" chattered Bubbs. "Let up a little, Dale—just a little!"

"That's the speed! that's the speed!" boomed Berlin Brooks. "It makes the atmosphere hot, captain!"

Gardner was not a whit disturbed. He poised his bat and serenely waited for the next one.

It was a wide outshoot, and Earl made no move.

"One ball!"

"That's the eye, Earl!" piped Obediah Tubbs, bouncing up from the bench like a rubber ball. "Don't bite at the benders! I never bite at anything but pie, by Jim! He's gut to give me pie!"

"You fellers will git pie to-day!" came from Uncle Eb. "You'll git it in the neck!"

"Sit down, Obey," said Dick, in a low tone. "Don't agitate yourself."

The next ball was high and swift.

Gardner struck under it.

"Two strikes!"

"Got 'im! got 'im! got 'im!" came from Bubbs. "He's in a hole!"

Still, the boy from Maine seemed unruffled, and

Dale tried in vain to coax him with the next two benders, both of which were balls.

"Now he's got to put it over," muttered Hal Darrell, who had selected his bat and was ready to follow Earl. "He won't dare to try a bender."

Dale did not try a regular curve, but, to the surprise of many spectators, he was seen to spit on his fingers and liberally moisten one side of the ball.

"The spit ball!" muttered Brad Buckhart. "Well, he's got a whole lot of nerve!"

Gardner fancied Sparkfair intended to throw the spit ball, which, under the circumstances, he regarded as a bad piece of judgment on the pitcher's part, for the chances were that on the shoot the ball would not come over the plate.

Now, it happened that Sparkfair was playing to deceive the batter, for, after moistening one side of the ball and apparently doing the same to his fingers, he carefully and secretly wiped his fingers on the heel of the glove that covered his left hand, turned the sphere over, and grasped it on the dry side.

A moment later he pitched.

It was not a "spit ball," for in the manner described Dale had deliberately thrown a straight, speedy ball over the heart of the plate. It looked low enough to go bad when it broke, and therefore Gardner checked the impulse to strike at it, letting it pass.

As the ball neither curved nor dropped, it passed over the plate fully four inches above Gardner's knees, and the umpire promptly cried:

"Three strikes! You're out!"

With difficulty Earl repressed his surprise and chagrin.

Merriwell seized Darrell's shoulder as he started to rise from the bench.

"Look out for that fellow, Sparkfair," whispered

Dick. "He's tricky. He pretended he was going to throw the spit ball that time, but he used a straight one. You've got to keep your wits about you, Hal."

Darrell looked grim enough, and his black eyes snapped as he took his position at the plate.

The Farnham Hall cheer had died away. Uncle Eb and Eli Given were still laughing and nudging each other like boys.

"I tell you, Eben, that Sparkfair is a terror!" cackled Eli. "Don't he fool 'em slick!"

"He's the most deceivin' young cuss I ever sot my eyes on," grinned Uncle Eb, fishing out his pipe and preparing to smoke.

"What you goin' to do?" questioned Given.

"Goin' to have a whiff," was the answer. "Sorter keeps my narves stiddy. Didn't s'pose I had any narves, but, by jinks! every time I come to a game I git all quivery when it starts. I ken feel myself twitchin' clean down to the ends of my toe nails."

"Kinder serves me the same way," confessed Eli, with a grin. "Still, it's a ruther slick feelin'. I kinder like it, Eben."

"How's the deacon standin' it?" inquired Small.

Both old chaps rubbered around at the deacon, who grinned back at them and wagged his hand with a satisfied gesture.

"We may need you to help us out when we git to singin' 'The Merry Boys,' deacon," called Uncle Eb. "You've gut a fine tenor voice."

"It ain't so fine as it was," said Hewett. "I guess I kinder cracked it the last time we sung."

"Oh, woo! woo! Look a' that! look a' that!" came from Small, as Sparkfair sent over one of his speediest balls, and Darrell missed it cleanly.

"Why, ding baste it, Eli, that ball was past him

before he seen it! He didn't have time to git his stick round."

"I kinder hope he don't strike 'em all out," said Given. "I like to see some of the other fellers do some work."

"That boy's too good as a pitcher—he's too good!" came from Small. "He's the best that ever was seen in this county."

Then he struck a match and lighted his pipe.

The next ball was a low inshoot, and Hal let it go by.

"Ball one!" droned the umpire sonorously.

Dale followed with a high one.

"Ball two!"

"Now he'll make him hit," said Given. "Jest you watch and see, Eb."

Darrell was prepared, and he swung at the shoot Dale sent over a corner.

It was a foul, but counted as a strike.

"That evens it up a whole lot, Hal," came from Buckhart, who found it difficult to keep still. "You're as good as he is, now, old bronc."

Sparkfair did his best to "pull" the batter with a drop, but failed.

"Ball three!"

"That puts you a whole lot to the good, Darrell," said the Texan. "Now look out for him."

Dale received the sphere from Crowfoot, but turned with it in his hands and surveyed the positions of his players. He motioned for Barking to move a bit to the right, which Thad did.

As Dale turned back, Darrell saw Sparkfair moistening the ball and his fingers. This Dale did rather slyly, as if wishing the batter to believe he was trying to hide the action. Still, Darrell knew Sparkfair had

taken pains to let him see what was done in this sly manner.

"The old trick," thought Hal, as Dale seemed quickly to turn the ball over in his hand.

Darrell fully believed the Farnham Hall boy was going to repeat the act by which he had deceived Gardner. Therefore the Fardale batter was prepared for a straight ball.

Spark made the delivery.

The ball seemed coming over the very heart of the plate.

Darrell struck at it.

The ball took a sudden, queer quirk, and Hal missed cleanly.

This time Dale had really used the spit ball.

A roar from the spectators drowned the words of the umpire declaring the batter out.

Eli Given danced up and down on his seat and then turned to his aged chum, making the discovery that Uncle Eb was spluttering and growling in a most disgusted manner.

"What's the matter, Eben—what's the matter?" shouted Small.

"Dot rot it!" answered Uncle Eb. "I fergut my pipe, and started to yell. I dropped her and smashed her all to flinders. Jest gut her so she was good and sweet."

"I told ye not to smoke—I told ye," said Eli. "You can't smoke and hollar at the same time."

Of all the Farnham Hall spectators, perhaps Guy Featherstone was the only one who did not cheer Sparkfair's clever work. Guy was almost green with envy.

"I believe they'll win to-day," he muttered sourly. "I'd give anything to see them defeated. If they win,

all Bloomfield is going to think Dale Sparkfair a little tin god."

"Well, well, here's your next victim, Spark," said Bubbs, as Barron Black advanced to the plate. "Why don't you give us a chance to show what we can do? We're in this game. Don't play it all by your lonesome."

"I'm awfully selfish, you know," laughed Dale.

Black seemed rather careless and off his guard as he settled himself on his feet, and Sparkfair suddenly snapped over a straight one.

To the astonishment of many, Black did not swing at the ball, but simply bunted it, holding his bat loosely and deflecting the sphere toward third. He was off almost before the ball dropped to the ground, running hard for first.

Netterby had been unprepared for a bunt at this juncture, yet he came in swiftly and scooped the ball up, making a fairly good throw to first.

Black was too fast to be caught, for he reached the initial sack ahead of the ball and was promptly declared safe.

"Oh, weeh! weeh!" squealed Obediah Tubbs, leaping up from the bench and dashing across to get onto the coaching line. "You're a pretty slick feller, you pitcher, but that's the time somebody fooled you! Now we're started! Git off that cushion, Black! Keep 'em guessin'! You can romp down to second jest as ee-e-zy!"

The fat boy made a comical appearance on the coaching line, and the crowd laughed at him.

"You have the grace of an elephant!" cried some one on the seats.

"That's no dis-grace," retorted Obey.

"It's Merriwell's turn!" was the cry, as Dick was seen to select a bat and walk out.

"That's what it is!" piped Obediah. "You bet there'll be doings now!"

At this point, a large touring car, with two persons on the front seat, swung through the gate and came to a stop at one end of the stand. The machine and its occupants were covered with dust, which seemed to indicate that they had made a long journey.

The two persons in the car were a boy and girl, who were instantly recognized, not only by Sparkfair, but by the whole Fardale team.

They were Chester Arlington and his sister, June.

The moment the automobile came to a stop, Chester stood up and looked the field over.

"Strike Merriwell out, Sparkfair!" he cried, waving his hand. "I know you can, and I've driven this old car two hundred miles to see you do it."

CHAPTER XXII.

GOOSE-EGGED.

At sight of June Arlington, two boys on that field felt a thrill over them. Sparkfair's face flushed, and his blue eyes beamed with delight.

Dick Merriwell seemed to turn pale, and for some seconds he stood with his bat poised, staring at the girl in the car. Had Sparkfair chosen to do so, he could have pitched a straight ball over the plate before Dick was aware of it. Indeed, Dale made ready to pitch, but restrained himself as he saw the batter's attention was distracted from the game.

"Play ball!" shouted a number of voices.

Dick aroused himself with a slight shake of his body, and turned his eyes on the pitcher. Instantly he was aware that Dale had waited for him, and, nodding a bit, he said:

"Thank you, Sparkfair."

"Mebbe you won't thank him for what he'll do to you," piped Uncle Eb. "It would be too bad to disappoint that feller who's run his old machine so fur to see you strike out."

Sparkfair tried an outcurve on Dick, starting the ball straight at the batter.

Instead of falling back, Merriwell maintained his poise, watched the ball curve, and swung at it as it came over.

Crack!

It was a beautiful line drive into right field, Jake Lander taking the ball on the second bound.

Lander made a swift throw to first, but Dick's great running carried him over the sack in time for him to be declared safe.

Black had not slackened at second, but crossed the bag at full speed and headed straight for third.

Brooks made a hasty throw to Netterby.

Already Billy Bradley was on the coaching line by third.

"Slide, you blooming skyrocket—slide!" he howled, motioning wildly to Black.

Barron flung himself forward in a desperate slide.

Evidently the throw was a trifle high, and this gave the runner time to reach the base before Netterby could tag him.

In his eagerness to touch Black, Netterby fumbled the ball just as he put it onto Barron, and the sphere rolled out of his hands.

Already Merriwell was well off first, and many thought him making a determined try for second before that fumble by Marl. Nevertheless, Dick had watched everything, and only when he saw the ball slip from Netterby's fingers did he put on full steam ahead.

Marl made a dive for the ball and caught it up, with the intention of whistling it down to Hollis.

"Hold it—hold that ball!" came from Sparkfair.

Dale had seen Black scramble up and make ready to try for a score if the Farnham Hall third baseman threw poorly to Hollis.

Spark's cry checked Marl just in time.

But Dick's clean hit had changed the aspect of affairs.

Over back of the first-base coaching line Obediah Tubbs attempted to turn a handspring, and fell flat on his back. He lay there kicking up his heels and squealing with delight.

"Two hundred miles to see him struck out!" piped the fat boy. "Well, that's a shame! That's a hard

one on little Chetty! Somebody turn the hose on me! I'm dying of pleasure!"

Deacon Hewett had risen to his feet in the great excitement, and now he suddenly lost his balance and pitched headlong over the row of people in front of him, striking on the shoulders of the next line. They gave him a boost, and down he went over the next row and the next, finally landing in a seat between Eben Small and Eli Given.

"Hello, boys!" he gasped, as soon as he could catch his breath. "Thought I'd come down and jine ye! Thutteration! wasn't that an awful thing that jest happened!"

In spite of the fact that the sympathy of the spectators was with the home team and every one had seemed dejected over what was taking place on the diamond, the circuslike performance of the deacon sent the whole stand into an uproar of laughter.

Eben and Eli were astounded by the startled and sudden appearance of Hewett, but as soon as they could recover from the shock each seized him by a hand and shook it warmly.

"I guess, by ginger! you've come jest in time, Elnathan," said Given. "Did you see that hit?"

"See it?" burst from the deacon. "That's what brought me down! I never stopped to ax Mrs. Hewett to excuse me, nuther."

As the excitement subsided, Chester Arlington again waved his hand to Sparkfair.

"That's only once, Dale, old boy!" he cried, with a forced laugh. "You'll have plenty more chances. You'll turn the trick all right, all right. Stop 'em where they are! Don't let 'em score!"

"I'd like to ch-ch-ch-chuck something at him!" growled Jolliby, who was the next hitter.

Chip glared at Chester as he stalked into the batter's box.

"This chalk mark is a snap, Spark," declared Chet. "You can fan him like a breeze. Just give him one on the inside corner and across the knees, and he'll never graze it."

Dale had secured the ball, but he seemed in no hurry to pitch. Instead of that, he looked around to make sure that his team had not been rattled by what had taken place.

"We're all here, Spark," assured Bubbs. "Don't worry about us."

Dale opened with a spit ball, which Jolliby missed.

"Didn't I tell you!" whooped Arlington. "He never could hit!"

Despite Chester's words, the tall boy landed on the next ball and hit it a terrific crack.

It was a long drive into left field.

Hiram Bemis made a sharp run, his lengthy legs carrying him over the ground amazingly. At full speed, while cutting across the course of the ball, he took it cleanly, and the third man was out.

Fardale had not scored.

"Get after Merriwell—get after him!" urged Arlington. "His reputation is all he has! Spoil that to-day!"

"Oh, I wish you wouldn't, Chester!" murmured June. "Please sit down and keep still!"

"Keep still?" he laughed. "Do you think I've driven all this distance to keep still?"

"Please sit down a little while!" implored June.

"All right," he smiled obligingly. "Now, look here, sis, whom do you want to see win this game? You haven't expressed yourself. You're in a hard position, old girl. There's Merriwell handing 'em up on one side and Sparkfair doing the twirling on the other.

Now, June, tell me the truth. Don't you want to see Sparkfair win?"

"I want to see the team win that plays the best game," she answered noncommittally.

"I'm disappointed," confessed Chet. "You've acknowledged that you like Spark. I did hope he had succeeded in cutting that fellow, Merriwell, out for good."

"Don't talk in such a silly manner," she remonstrated. "To hear you, any one would think me engaged to Dick Merriwell."

"Well, I hope not!" growled her brother. "You'll cut clear of him sooner or later, I'm sure of that."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Oh, I know—I know. All that's necessary to fix it is that you shall see a little more of my friend, Sparkfair. He's all the mustard, June."

The Farnham Hall boys gave Dick a cheer as he toed the pitcher's slab. They were sportsmen enough to do this, in spite of their desire to see their own team successful.

Dick opened easily, without any preliminary movements, and shot a ball across Bubbs' shoulders.

Bob let it go by, but it was called a strike.

"Don't forget I'm not six feet tall, umpire," he muttered.

The next two were balls, and then Bubbs connected with one. He drove a hot grounder between second and third bases, but Earl Gardner made a fine one-handed stop, scooped the sphere up cleanly, and threw Towser out.

Elnathan, Eben, and Eli had risen with a cheer on their lips, but that cheer ended with a groan, and they sank back to their seats.

Netterby followed Bubbs and made four fouls in succession. Then Dick fooled Marl with the combina-

tion ball, and the second Farnham Hall batter was sent to the bench.

"I'm going to hit that old ball!" muttered Hi Bemis.

He did hit it, but it went high in the air, and Merriwell stood watching it.

Hal Darrell trotted in behind Dick.

"I'll take it," he said quietly.

"All right," answered Dick, and started for the bench.

Darrell caught the ball.

The first inning had produced nothing but goose eggs.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DALE'S DELIGHT.

In the meantime, as soon as he left the diamond, Sparkfair hurried straight to the automobile, his face wreathed in smiles as he bowed before June, cap in hand.

"Miss Arlington, this is a most unexpected pleasure," he said. "I'm more than delighted."

She held out her hand to him, and Chester chuckled a bit to himself as he noted the warm flush in her cheeks.

"How do you do, Mr. Sparkfair?" she said.

"Oh, you've forgotten—you've forgotten," protested Spark, as he eagerly grasped her fingers. "You gave me your promise to call me Dale. Don't you remember that night when the motor refused to mote and we sat beside the little moon-silvered lake while your brother went forth into the lonely world in search of aid?"

"I'll never forget that," said June, in a low tone, "only I think you're wrong when you speak of it as a lonely world on that night."

"Oh, it wasn't for me, don't you know," Dale hurried to declare. "I was just referring to Chester. It must have been lonely for him as he hoofed it along the road through those woods and listened to the hooting of that homesick owl that was disturbed by us and kept shouting, 'Who! who! who!' You remember you were admiring the beauty of the night—while I was admiring a different beauty—and you commenced to comment on it by saying, 'I love.' Then that impertinent, insolent old owl interrupted by demanding, 'Who?' Don't you remember?"

Although June laughed in her delightful girlish way, she was crimson from brow to throat.

"Don't think you have to recall those things in order for me to remember," she protested. "I'm not so forgetful—Dale."

He still had her hand, and as she softly spoke his Christian name he gave her fingers a warm pressure.

"I was afraid you would forget—June," he said. "I realize there's nothing about me to make a person like you remember such trifles."

"Come, you two, break away," laughed Arlington. "By Jove! you're attracting the attention of all this crowd. People are looking at you and laughing. They seem to think you're going to hold hands the rest of the afternoon. How are you, Sparkfair, old dandy?"

Dale's face was flushed now, and he reluctantly released June's hand, grasping the outstretched palm of her brother.

"I'm feeling a great deal better—just now," he asserted. "You're looking pretty well yourself, Arlington, my boy."

"Never was in such fine trim before," said Chet. "This little trip has done me good, although we had to start early yesterday, and we've struck some rotten bad roads on the way. Got hung up twice, but I was bound to sail in here on time to see this game. We drove till after ten last night, then got a square feed and slept like tops until morning. We're here, old chap, and now it's up to you to deliver the goods. We've got to take a fall out of Dick Merriwell or I'll be so disappointed that I'll have to shed real tears."

"We're going to do our best, Arlington," said Dale. "You know we defeated Fardale once on her own field."

"Yes," nodded Chester, "and I take a little credit

for that myself. If I hadn't managed somehow to get you to that train so that you could step into the box when your other pitcher went to the bad, Fardale would have reaped a scalp. That was a corking game, Spark—a corking game! It did me more good than a dozen bottles of spring tonic. Say, but this old machine did behave ragged this trip, didn't it? I've had her generally overhauled since then. Carburetor was out of order, and the transmission wasn't just right. We couldn't get the power on the hills. But we did go some on the level stretches, didn't we?"

"Oh, I'll never forget that wonderful leap you made, Dale, when you sprang to the platform of the last car of that passing train!" put in June. "My heart leaped, too. It came up into my mouth. Then, when I saw you were safe, and you turned to wave your hand, I nearly fainted from relief and relaxation."

Chet leaned over and hoarsely whispered in her ear:

"You're giving yourself away. Never show your hand. That's a good motto."

At the same time, he winked slyly at Dale.

"Do you intend to remain in Bloomfield long?" hastily asked Spark, pretending not to notice the girl's confusion.

"Oh, I dunno," answered Chet. "We'll not be in any hurry about pulling out."

"I suppose you'll have to get back to Fairport by Monday morning."

"I don't have to get anywhere. I'm independent."

"But if you don't get back——"

"If he doesn't get back," said June quickly, "he'll find himself in lots of trouble. He's been away so much this spring that already the principal is extremely exasperated with him, and has warned him against further unpermitted absences. If he isn't back there

when the school opens Monday, I know he'll be suspended."

Chet laughed.

"I don't think it will make much difference whether I'm back or not," he declared. "It strikes me that I'm due to be suspended, anyhow."

"Why, how's that?" exclaimed his sister. "You obtained leave when you came away, didn't——"

"I took it, little girl—I took it," chuckled Chet. "I told you I'd come for you and bring you over here if I could get permission. I telephoned you to be ready. Well, I knew what would happen if I asked old prexie. I knew he would say 'no.' "

"And you—you didn't ask permission?" gasped June.

Arlington shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"I didn't take the trouble. You see, had I done so and had he refused me, I'd been compelled to go against his explicit order. This being the case, I immediately packed my grip, and serenely sailed away."

"Oh, I wish you'd told me!" breathed the girl. "If I'd known that, I'd never come, Chester!"

"Oh, what's the use, sis? I'm nobody's slave. I'm my own master, and I will go and come when I wish. Restrictions are irksome to me. It's all right."

"If you're suspended at Fairport, father is going to be perfectly exasperated."

"Well, it won't be the first time the gov'nor has been exasperated. He ought to be used to it by this time. As far as Fairport's concerned I've got about all I want of that place. You know why I went into that school, sis. It was within reach of Fardale, and I was looking for a chance to get back at my beloved friend, Merriwell. We should have beaten Fardale this spring, Sparkfair. There was every reason to expect it. I pitched the game of my life against that bunch. For

six innings they only made two measly scratch singles off me. It's true I didn't strike Merriwell out, but I made him bat the ball into somebody's hands every time he faced me."

"And you finally lost the game?" questioned Spark.

"Oh, no, I didn't lose it," denied Chester. "It was the bum playing behind me that cooked us. Of ocurse, no man can keep a good-hitting team from getting at the ball at all times unless he's more than human. When Fardale began hitting a little, those slobs behind me made all kinds of rotten plays. It was absolutely agonizing to see them fall all over themselves."

"But you lost your temper, Chester," said June. "You called two or three of the fellows down."

"They deserved it. I didn't call them down hard enough. There it was with the score one to nothing in our favor, and it would have ended that way had those chumps played ball. After they threw the game away by their foolishness and Fardale had scored four runs, I didn't try to pitch."

Sparkfair had a suspicion of the truth, for some one had told him that Arlington, like Guy Featherstone, was a good man in the box for five or six innings. In most cases after that number of innings had been played, Chester began to weaken. His method of living, his neglect of proper training, and his usual ambitious desire to strike out all the batters, made it impossible for him to "go the limit" without slumping.

"Well, that was hard luck," said Dale.

"Oh, it gave Merriwell the chance he was looking for," nodded Chet. "It enabled Fardale to win the championship this spring. As the games stand now, she can't be headed. She's got it fast and safe. I understand you fellows have been playing some fancy baseball over here."

"We're the champions of the county," said Spark.

"Then it's a case of champions against champions. Go in and beat Fardale to-day, Sparkfair. You've got to do it! And don't forget that I'm here to see you strike Dick Merriwell out."

"Come on, Dale!" called Bob Bubbs.

"What's the matter?" asked Spark, as he turned, in surprise. "Is it my turn to strike?"

"Not this inning," answered the little fellow. "We're out."

"As quick as this?" muttered the Farnham Hall captain, hardly able to realize it.

He had been so absorbed that he had not noticed the passing of time nor observed what was happening on the field.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

It was a game worth driving two hundred miles to see. Not until the last of the sixth was a run made. Then, by a hit, an error, and a wild throw, Farnham Hall secured her first tally.

During the excitement of this inning Eben Small, Eli Given, and Elnathan Hewett came down from their seats and lined up on the coaching line, where they convulsed the crowd with their antics as young Joe Crowfoot, by wonderful sprinting, reached home after the wild throw.

The Farnham boys stood and cheered and cheered and cheered again. The colors of the school fluttered in the breeze. When the cheering ceased the three old rooters on the coaching line struck into "The Merry Boys" song, which was taken up by the great crowd.

Chester Arlington was happy.

"That's all they need," he declared. "That fellow, Sparkfair, is the greatest pitcher I ever saw. He certainly has Merriwell trimmed."

"Do you think the game settled?" asked June. "Do you suppose one run will settle it?"

"One run's liable to be enough in this sort of a game. I believe that Sparkfair is going to shut Fardale out. That will be great work."

In the meantime Dick had improved an opportunity to shake hands with June and had nodded, out of courtesy, to her brother.

Sparkfair had given June's fingers a pressure when he greeted her, but it was June who gave Dick's fingers a pressure.

In spite of Chester's prediction that one run would settle the game, the visitors went after Dale rather

hotly in the first of the seventh. Black opened with a safe hit. Merriwell bunted and sacrificed Barron to second. Jolliby followed with another bunt, and Black reached third while Chip was being thrown out. Then came big Bob Singleton, who drove such a fierce grounder at Hollis that the Farnham Hall second baseman could not handle it. The ball went through his hands, and it was Fardale's turn to rejoice as Black romped home. Singleton attempted to reach second, but sleepy Jake Lander was wide awake, and secured the ball in time to nail big Bob ere he could anchor at sack number two.

"Rotten! rotten!" growled Arlington. "That second baseman ought to be shot! That's tough on Spark!"

The excitement was positively feverish as the game continued.

"I'm purty nigh all in, boys!" said Uncle Eb, as he leaned on his crooked cane, panting heavily. "This is too much for an old feller like me. Heart disease is liable to finish me to-day."

Farnham Hall could not reach first in the last half of the seventh inning.

The eighth inning opened with another shock for the home team and its admirers.

Billy Bradley dumped a little bunt in front of the plate, and the ball rolled just far enough to prevent Crowfoot from getting it up in time to throw Bradley out at first.

Then Obediah Tubbs surprised every one by dropping a Texas Leaguer outside the infield. On this hit Bradley reached third.

Earl Gardner came up, and hit one into the diamond, being thrown out at first.

With one out and a man on third, Merriwell signaled for the "squeeze play."

Darrell indicated to Bradley that he would hit the first ball pitched and try to drive it into the diamond somewhere.

Bradley knew what to do. Even as Sparkfair started on a quick delivery, Billy leaped from third and went dashing toward the home plate. He did not wait to see what would happen, but depended on Darrell to connect with the ball somehow.

Hal made good. He batted the ball straight at Bob Bubbs, who scooped it up cleanly and whistled it back to the home plate.

For all of little Bob's clean and rapid work, Bradley had obtained such a start that he crossed the pan in safety, and Fardale had the lead.

Sparkfair did not let up in the least, and no further runs came in.

The home team succeeded, in their half of the inning, in placing a runner on first, but two men were out already, and the next batter lifted an easy fly to Buckhart, who smothered it when it came down.

Sparkfair was invincible in the ninth. The visitors could not add to their lead.

There was a terrific uproar when the home team came to bat in the last of this inning.

"You've got to do it, Spark!" shouted Arlington.

Dale smiled and nodded that his confidence was still good and hope had not left him.

But now Dick Merriwell showed what he could do on the slab. His pitching was that of a wizard. The ball took all sorts of erratic shoots after leaving his hand. Not a batter who faced him could touch it. He struck out three men in succession, and a bitter exclamation of dismay escaped Chester Arlington as the last man fanned.

"Two hundred miles for this!" muttered Chet. "It's tough! it's tough!"

CHAPTER XXV.

VICTOR AND VANQUISHED.

The game was over. Fardale had won. Farnham Hall had been defeated on her own field through the "squeeze play," skillfully worked by Hal Darrell at bat and Billy Bradley on third.

Still, it may not be said that Darrell and Bradley were principally responsible for the success of the visitors in defeating Frank Merriwell's great team. Dick Merriwell had instructed his players to try the "squeeze play" whenever directed to do so at a critical point in any game. He had given the signal, and the two boys mentioned had followed directions faithfully.

Even after that Farnham Hall had a chance when their last turn at bat came, but it was Dick's wonderful playing that "placed the game on ice," for the last three batters to face him went down like men of straw.

The great crowd that had been so confidant of Farnham Hall's success was bitterly disappointed, but on all that field no one felt so bitter and regretful as Chester Arlington, who had driven two hundred miles in an automobile, with his sister at his side, for the purpose of watching the great clash between these champion teams.

For a few moments it seemed that the crowd could not believe that its idols had met defeat. Then came murmurs of regret as the spectators began to descend slowly from the seats and move toward the gate.

Back of first base three old men, Uncle Eb Small, Eli Given, and Deacon Hewett, who had rooted vigorously for Farnham Hall, were standing in a little sad-faced group like mourners at a funeral.

The Farnham Hall boys lingered a bit on their seats. Out in front of them rushed Sparkfair, who hastily spoke to Will Spenser, the cheering captain.

"Wake up, Spenser, old fellow!" said Dale. "Give Fardale a cheer. Show that Farnham Hall can lose with good grace."

Spenser turned and waved his hand at the boys, attracting their attention. Then he lifted his megaphone and called:

"Let's show our sporting blood, fellows! Let's give Fardale a rouser! Ready, now! One—two—three!"

He dropped the megaphone, lifted his arms, and beat out the barking cheer that followed:

"'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! Fardale! Fardale! Fardale!"

Already the visitors were packed about their captain, Dick Merriwell, and promptly in response they cheered:

"'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! 'Rah! 'rah! 'rah! Farnham Hall! Farnham Hall! Farnham Hall!"

Without delay, the Farnham boys gave Dick Merriwell a cheer, and, not to be outdone in courtesy, the visitors retorted with one for Sparkfair.

"I don't wonder them Fardale fellers feel purty good," groaned old Eb Small, leaning heavily on his cane; "but I don't see how our boys ken cheer like that. It was awful to be beat arter gittin' a good grip on the game."

"I ain't goin' to see no more ball games," sighed Eli Given. "They're too much for me. If we win, I git all ruxed up so that I'm played out complete, and if we lose, I feel so thunderin' blue that I can't eat no supper. How do you feel, deacon?"

"Well, I don't feel jest like prayin'," confessed Elnathan. "It's purty hard to beat a Merriwell, I've

made up my mind on that p'int. Frank Merriwell's brother's cap'n of that team, and that's why we gut licked. Where's Mirandy? I'm goin' home, boys. I shan't stop at Applesnack's store to talk the game over to-night."

Mrs. Hewett approached, looking as sorrowful as her husband. Immediately he hastened to pat her on the shoulder, saying:

"There, there, girl, don't look like that. You're bluer'n a whetstone. We can't win all the games, ye know."

"What did you say when we lost, Elnathan?" questioned his wife. "Did you say anything violent?"

"Oh, no!"

"Well, why didn't you? If I'd 'a' been a man, I'm afeared I would."

Immediately Uncle Eb doffed his old hat to the woman.

"Mis' Hewett," he said, "you're all right. I allus knowed you was, even if you didn't think much of me and Eli. Mebbe you've noticed that me and Eli have taken to 'tendin' church reg'lar of late?"

"Yes, I've noticed it."

"Well, since you've gi'n the deacon permission to 'tend ball games with us, we've decided it was our duty to turn round and 'tend the church. We ain't perfessers, neither one of us, and we've allus thought some of you church folks was too hidebound and narrer and prejudiced. Twixt Frank Merriwell and this new minister, purty nigh all the sinners in town has taken to 'tendin' baseball games and church reg'lar as clockwork. I don't know but one man who's remained sot agin' the church. That was Homer Dearborn. T'other night over at the grocery Homer was sayin' as how it would be better if people had baseball on Sunday instead of church. He kicked up a power-

ful hot argument over it, and he was kinder gittin' the best of the argufyin'. He was holdin' out that folks who worked hard all the week and couldn't git to baseball games ought to have a chance to have fun on Sunday, instead of settin' inside of an old meetin'-house. Right in the midst of it, without nobody noticin' him, Frank Merriwell come in. He stood still and listened a while. Bimeby somebody spotted him, and they spoke up and axed him what he had to say 'bout the matter. What d'ye s'pose he said?"

Mrs. Hewett shook her head.

"Well, he said there wa'n't nobody round Bloomfield that couldn't find time once in a while to see a good baseball game. He said that Sunday was the Lord's day, and it was the duty of every one to 'tend church in the forenoon, at least. In the arternoon he believed people should rest, and they couldn't git much rest a-settin' in the sun and bakin', and hollerin', and whoopin' it up while they watched a ball game. 'Baseball,' says he, 'is not a thing for the Sabbath.' At that Dearborn laughed and says, 'The better the day, the better the deed, ye know.' Then you should have heard Mr. Merriwell trim Homer on that. He told him there was a lot of fool sayin's jest like that that people attempted to apply to excuse their bad actions. He jest showed that simply because one thing was good it didn't make another thing good. Says he, 'Mr. Dearborn, do you cal'late a murder would be any better on the Sabbath day than it would be on a week day?' Well, by ginger, he had Homer, and he shet him up tighter'n a trap. 'Tween me and you, Mis's Hewett, I wouldn't be a bit s'prised to see Dearborn out to church next Sunday. If he does come, Frank Merriwell will be responsible for it."

"Oh, that young man has made a great change in this town," said the deacon's wife. "We've gut to

give him the credit for it. But, come, we're a-standin' here and talkin' after 'most all the folks have left."

In the meantime, Sparkfair had hastened to shake hands with Dick Merriwell.

"You gave us the gaff to-day, Richard, old man," he said, with a sickly smile. "You won squarely and handsomely."

"But you made us go some," laughed Dick. "It was the fiercest game of the season in some respects."

"I was sorry to disappoint Arlington, but I couldn't strike you out, Merriwell. I worked all the tricks I knew on you, and you managed to connect with the ball every time, whether you got a hit or not."

"I think we were both on our mettle, Dale. We both knew a certain little girl with a pair of handsome eyes was watching us. You kept me from hitting safely once when a good clean single would have given us two runs. I wanted that hit, and I tried for it my level best, but I couldn't deliver the goods."

"Well, she's still here," reminded Sparkfair. "The last time we were up against each other we went together to speak with her after the game was finished."

"That was a good precedent to follow," smiled Dick.

Thus it happened that once more these two worthy rivals approached June in company.

"Hard luck, Spark," called Chet, shaking his head regretfully. "How do you feel about it?"

"Well, to confess the truth," answered Dale, "I feel like using worse English than was ever seen on a billiard table. I have sternly repressed this desire to make remarks not fit for publication."

"Oh, it was a splendid game!" exclaimed June. "It was one worth traveling more than two hundred miles to see!"

Spark felt a pang.

"She's glad Merriwell won!" he thought.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DICK IS DARED.

Nevertheless, Dale spoke lightly in his usual jesting manner.

"I'm going to retire to the solitude of my room and weep," he said. "I shall shed buckets of water. Niagara Falls won't be one, two, three with me."

"I'm sorry for you," declared June.

"Are you, really?" he asked, with a trace of eagerness he could not repress.

"I am," she answered; "but I'm glad for Dick."

"Well, that's rather cleverly said," smiled Spark. "Neither of us knows just where he's at."

"Oh, you can't beat Merriwell's luck!" growled Chester.

"Well, I've always thought I was born under a lucky star," nodded Spark. "Lillian Russell had an apartment directly over ours at the time I uttered my first squawk."

June laughed as she placed a hand on Dick Merriwell's shoulder, with her eyes fastened on Dale.

"Don't you think him an odd fellow, Dick?" she asked.

"He may be a thirty-second-degree Mason, for all I know," answered Merriwell.

"Oh, that's clever!" cried Sparkfair. "I'd like to give you something for that, Richard. I'd like to give you about six months."

"Perhaps I deserve it," smiled Dick.

At this moment Jack Cooley and several of his Wellsburg friends and teammates approached.

"Hello, Spark!" cried Cooley, with a grin. "You had it handed out to you all right to-day, my boy."

"So kind of you to mention it," said Dale.

"Oh, no reflections," retorted Jack. "I know you're feeling bad, but think how happy you've made me."

"It was very kind of me to pass you up a laugh," said Spark, with a wry face. "Still, you mustn't forget, Cooley, my boy, that we remain champeens of the county. We took that glorious title away from you."

"Why don't you buy yourself flowers?"

"Oh, I'm going to, old boy. I'm going to pin a Christmas anthem onto myself. It's a shame to be so modest."

"I haven't met your friends, you know."

"Pardon the oversight, dear boy," implored Spark. "Miss Arlington, this is Jack Cooley, captain of the Wellsburg nine. Cooley, Chester Arlington, a friend of mine."

"Glad to know you, Cooley," said Chet, who had stepped out of the car. "Glad to shake your hand, old boy."

"Give it back to him when you get through," urged Dale, as Chet gave Jack a prolonged handshake. "He may need it. Prepare to kotow, Cooley. This is Richard Merriwell, the original and only. There's not another like him—except his brother."

"How are you, Merriwell?" cried the Wellsburg lad, as he grasped Dick's fingers. "You're the very chap we're looking for. We have a proposition to make to you."

"Indeed?" smiled Dick. "Is there anything in it?"

"There's a good stiff drubbing for you and your team if you have the nerve to accept. As I hinted before, I wanted to see you down Farnham Hall today."

"Very kind, I'm sure."

"Oh, I had a motive," confessed Cooley. "You

know these fellows whipped us for the county championship. That thing is all settled, but still we Wellsburgans have a belief that our team is the best one in the county."

"I'm not the only modest person around here, it seems," murmured Sparkfair.

"You know, Merriwell," continued Cooley, "that there is unquestionably an element of luck in baseball. The best team generally wins, but there are exceptions to all rules. Farnham Hall barely defeated us by the skin of her teeth."

"But we've got the skin," reminded Dale. "Twenty-three for yours."

"We want to show you up," persisted Cooley. "Fardale has beaten you twice out of three times, and I think that comes pretty near settling which team is the better. Now we're looking for Fardale. We're going to trim Fardale. If we do that, your championship will be rather hollow and empty."

"You're making me feel like a bass drum already!" half groaned Spark.

"My proposition, Merriwell," Cooley went on, "is that, now you're in this part of the country, you remain here until Saturday with your team and play us in Wellsburg. What do you say?"

"I'm afraid it's impossible," answered Dick. "We haven't leave from school for that length of time."

"Oh, but you can get it!" cried Cooley. "You can fix that. Come on, Merriwell, you're challenged! You're dared! We dare you to play us!"

"That's a great idea," grinned Chester Arlington. "Rub it in, Cooley! Put it up to him good and hard. Don't let him duck! If he dares accept your challenge, I'll remain and see that game."

"I trust you understand it's not a question of challenge at all," said Dick. "It's a matter of duty."

"Oh, the dutiful dear!" murmured Chet, in his most sneering way. "Isn't he the real obedient thing!"

"Here are some of my friends, Merriwell," said the Wellsburg captain, calling his companions forward and proceeding to introduce them. "We're all anxious for you to accept our challenge."

Brad Buckhart had been lingering at a little distance, but now he ventured to come forward and spoke to Dick in a low tone.

"If there's any way to fix it, pard," he urged, "take him up—go him. Can't we telegraph to Professor Gunn? Can't we ask permission to stay some?"

"We can telegraph," nodded Dick.

"Will you?" demanded Cooley.

"Richard," said Sparkfair, "I refrained from mentioning the particular weakness of this Wellsburg chap when I introduced him. He's greedy. He literally yearns for defeat. If it's possible, by all means take his dare and give him all that's coming to him. You'll have to-morrow to lay off here at Farnham Hall, and I'll guarantee the fellows will do their best to entertain you."

Then he turned to June and spoke to her in such a low tone that no one else heard his words.

"I'm the greedy one myself, June. If Merriwell stays, your brother has said that he'll remain, and that will keep you here."

She gave him a smile.

"Are you so anxious to have me remain?" she murmured.

"Anxious doesn't express it. I'm dying. Catch the glassy stare in my eyes."

"I should hate to have you die on my account."

"Oh, it would be a sweet death! If you should ask me to commit suicide for you, I'm afraid that this Spark would fare on to the Golden Shore."

"Oh, I never heard any one who could talk like you," laughed the girl.

"I've been told that before," he nodded. "Why, once on a time, a man told me if he could only talk like me he'd be able to sell electric belts. I'm a great talker, June. Why, sometimes I even talk to myself in my sleep just to be sociable. My mother could talk a little before me—at least, father said so. Once on a time I heard him tell mother that if lockjaw was contagious he'd hire a person who had it to hang round her until she got it. Oh, father was a heartless brute! At times he was the most tumultuously impolite man I ever saw. It's always been a wonder to me, having such an impetuous and thoughtless dad, that I'm a perfect Beau Brummel of politeness myself. Still, my parents have always treated me nicely. Whenever I became greedy and wanted something I had no right to have, they gave it to me—good. Still, it's barely possible they might have done better had they given it to me oftener. Say what I may, my father has always been a stern and righteous man. He is a minister, you know. On Sunday he expounds the gospel and pounds the pulpit. Besides being a minister, he's an artist. He's always been able to draw well, and his church is full every Sunday. On Monday some of his congregation are full, too. Oh, I admire my father. He can pound the pulpit better and holler louder than any other minister I ever saw."

"You ought to be ashamed!" protested June, althought she was laughing in spite of herself. "It's disgraceful to talk like that! Are you telling the truth?"

"You can't prove it by me. Honestly, I don't know. I have such a feverish imagination that I never can be sure whether I'm telling the truth or merely guessing at things. Come to think of it, I'm not certain whether my father ever was a minister. Somehow I

got that into my head. It may have been my uncle. You see, my uncle and my father were twins, and they looked so much alike that sometimes they got mixed up themselves. Uncle used to live with us a great deal, and trying to pick out my father was a most appalling job. Finally I struck on a scheme for doing it. When I wasn't quite sure whether one of them was my father or my uncle, I would creep up behind him and jab him with a pin. If he said, 'Oh, gee whiz!' it was father, for he never swore. Uncle would always say something else. But, really, that manner of settling the point didn't work long. The trouble was that after I had tried it two or three times I had to eat my meals standing up. It was very painful for me to sit down."

While Dale had been chattering away in this fashion, Merriwell's friends of the Fardale team had gathered around him and entered into a discussion regarding the advisability of accepting Cooley's challenge. Dick found the most of them in favor of accepting.

"It's up to you, Merriwell, old chap," laughed the Wellsburg captain. "By Jove! I believe you *are* afraid."

"Well, I'll settle that point in your mind," laughed Dick easily. "As long as the boys are willling to stay, I'll go with you directly to the telegraph station in town and wire Professor Gunn. If he gives his permission, we'll remain here and play you Saturday."

"Hooray!" cried Cooley.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AT SQUEERS' TAVERN.

The only public house in Bloomfield was one owned and maintained for years by a veteran citizen by the name of Peter Squeers. It was called Squeers' Tavern, although it was scarcely more than a village farmhouse where such travelers as came along and wished to stop were given accommodation. Squeers was rather a peculiar, old-fashioned, mild-mannered man, careless in his clothes and wholly unpolished in regard to manners, although about him there was a sort of simple freeness and hospitality that made up for his lack of polish.

This man had accumulated what was regarded in Bloomfield as a comfortable fortune. He had obtained this little fortune by years of hard work, economy, and business sagacity. Outside the village he owned two farms which he operated, and these, together with the little tavern, produced a modest income, which established him as a man of some importance in the community, and made him feel safe from worry in regard to his declining years.

Ever since the opening of Squeers' Tavern it had been conducted on the same old-fashioned plan, and the transient guest, as a rule, had been well satisfied with the service and accommodation given him. No one around the place put on "frills" or seemed inclined to make a bluff that anything was superior to its actual condition.

But at last Squeers' Tavern had caught the fever for change and improvement which was running epidemic in the little village. At last Peter Squeers himself seemed to realize that his hostelry was inadequate to

provide properly for the astonishing number of travelers and guests who were coming there.

It is probable that the rumor about a new hotel being opened in town drifted to the ears of Mr. Squeers. It is not unlikely that this rumor was accompanied by a hint that the old village tavern was not up to the times and just what it should be.

Squeers was intelligent enough to note the changes and improvements taking place all around him in the village. By inquiry he found that all these things did not come wholly through the fact that his neighbors were seeking to outdo each other in "putting up an appearance." He had discovered that all the little business places of the village were prospering far beyond their most prosperous time at any earlier period. There was money in town, and it was circulating. The young people who came to Bloomfield from outside places for the purpose of witnessing the sports and games on the athletic field of Farnham Hall brought in some of this money and left it behind them. Many of them came hungry and sought accommodations at the tavern.

But this was only an item. Presperous-looking men from the cities were dropping into Bloomfield with their good clothes and their "swagger atmosphere." They were buying land over on the northern side. They were building summer cottages there. Laborers were required for this work, and Bloomfield could not supply them all. Indeed, Bloomfield could supply only a small portion of the labor that was demanded. This brought workmen of all sorts into the village from outside, and these workmen, every one of them being well paid for his labor, were spending some of their earnings in the town.

An idea began to take form in the head of Peter Squeers. Being conservative and careful, he looked

this idea over in the most guarded manner before deciding upon it. His one fear was that the sudden prosperity of the little village was a temporary change which would soon pass away, permitting the place to fall back into the old rut. Had he felt certain this prosperity would continue, Mr. Squeers would have carried his idea into execution before he did.

Finally he decided to act upon it.

One morning the villagers were surprised to find a number of laborers industriously at work on the old tavern. To begin with, they ripped off the shingles and reshingled the roof. They followed this by making repairs on the exteriors of the huge stables and outbuildings. Then the painters went at it, and all those buildings were given three clean coats of white paint.

The yard was cleared up. The lawn was trimmed. Sods were set in places worn bare. Flower beds were made. And things generally were so much improved that Squeers' Tavern presented an entirely new aspect to the occasional traveler who had seen it in years past.

But all the improvements were not made on the outside. Within the old tavern, work was going on. Many of the dingy old rooms were repapered, calcimined, recarpeted, and partly refurnished. The soiled yellow shades at the windows were replaced by new shades of a light olive color. The front windows were supplied with new muslin curtains.

Squeers was the overseer while these alterations were being made. After the work was done and the laborers were gone he had a habit of going over the house and admiringly surveying things at least once a day. He would smile in his placid old way, rub his hands together, and murmur:

"A new hotel here in Bloomfield! Why, there's not

another house as good as this within a hundred miles of here, outside of Wellsburg. I don't think Bloomfield needs a new hotel. Rufus Applesnack told me I was getting behind the times. Rufus can't say that now. I've spent a lot of money here—a lot of money. But I never knew folks to have so much money to spend as they do nowadays. I've raised my prices a trifle, but nobody seems to object. Now, there's the best room. I can get a dollar a day for it right along, and I never used to ask over seventy-five cents. I used to charge twenty-five cents a meal, but now I get fifty for dinner. I don't see where all the money comes from. I'm afraid folks is getting foolish and spending more than they can really afford to. It's a bad sign when folks do that. It ain't right for anybody to spend more than he can afford to spend. Some folks say all this change has come through that young man, Merriwell. I dunno, I dunno. Perhaps it is. Anyhow, it's come since he settled here. But all the money that's floating around don't come out of his pocket. If I've been foolish in rigging things up this way, I'll have to stand it when the hard times come again. Until them hard times do come I'm going to give everybody his money's worth at Squeers' Tavern."

An hour after the finish of the great baseball game between Farnham Hall and Fardale a large touring car came through the village and swung into the yard at the tavern. Chester Arlington guided the car round to the stable, the doors of which were standing wide open. He tooted the Gabriel horn impatiently for a man standing in the stable door, and when this man did not move, Chester sharply cried:

"Get out the way, you old chump! I want to run in there!"

"I wouldn't come in here," said the man. "This stable is for horses."

"Seeing you there," insolently retorted Chet, "I thought perhaps it was for jackasses!"

June uttered a little exclamation of dismay.

"Don't—oh, don't, Chester!" she expostulated.

"Oh, these old Rubes give me a cramp!" he growled.

The man in the stable door had made no immediate retort, but stood there, rubbing his hands slowly together, his eyes fixed on Chet. Finally he spoke, and his voice was still calm and well modulated.

"Are you intending to stop here at the tavern?" he inquired.

"Well, what do you think I'm running in here for?" sneered Chet.

"Why didn't you let the young lady out at the steps?"

"Why didn't I? That's my business. Perhaps she didn't want to get out there."

"If you was out driving with her in a team, you wouldn't drive into the stable without letting her out, would you?"

"Oh, I might. What the dickens is it to you whether I would or not? Come on now, give me room or I'll bump you!"

Chet pulled open the throttle a notch and pressed his foot on the slow-speed lever. The machine moved forward straight for the man in the door. That man did not move a muscle, although the automobile came on until it almost touched him.

With a cry of exasperation, Arlington shut off the speed and applied the brake.

"Are you paralyzed, you old hayseed?" he demanded. "Do you think you can stop me by standing in my way?"

"I did stop you, didn't I?" was the counter question. "Now look here, young man, I've told you you can't come in here. If you'd ask me for my reasons, I'll ex-

plain. Last week one of them machines came here, and I kept it overnight in the stable. The next day Jack Jones, the insurance agent, came round and notified me that my insurance would be canceled if I done so again. You know them things contain gasoline, and in order to put them up we have to pay a bigger insurance, for the policy on this place won't permit me to store autymobeels."

"Why, are you the proprietor?" asked Chester, in evident astonishment.

"I expect I be," was the answer.

"Well, wouldn't that bump you some!" muttered Arlington. "I supposed the old fool was a hostler."

"Now see what you've done!" breathed June. "You've insulted him!"

"Oh, you can't insult these countrymen," he half whispered. "They're too thick-witted to notice anything you say."

Once more he addressed the tavern keeper.

"Had you explained the situation in the first place, your royal highness," he said, "I'd have understood it better. But let me give you a piece of advice. Take out a new insurance policy. Provide for the accommodation of motorists. You'll find it to your advantage to do so. Horses are all right in their places, but the place of a horse is hitched to a plow. In these times people who have money to spend don't travel around the country behind horses."

"I dunno 'bout that," said Peter Squeers. "It may be so where you come from, young man, but 'tain't so round here. Mighty few autymobeelists come to this tavern. We see 'em going through town now and then, but they don't stop here. My class of custom is the kind that travels behind horses, and for all of your kind advice I think I'll continer to look for that sort of trade."

By that you mean you don't want us? Do you mean you won't put us up?"

"Oh, no, not at all, young man. I mean I can't take your machine into this stable. If you'll leave it out there in the yard a proper distance away, there'll be no objections. As for you and the young lady, Squeers' Tavern is open, and you'll get the best we have gut if you want it."

"That's very nice of you, sir," said June quickly. "I wish you to know that we appreciate it, and we're very sorry if there's been any misunderstanding. My brother didn't mean any harm, and we hope your feelings haven't been hurt."

Old Peter Squeers bobbed a little bow and awkwardly touched the brim of his hat.

"It's all right, young lady," he assured quietly. "The young feller was a little brash with me, but I guess I ken overlook it. These young fellers to-day are different from what they used to be, and they don't seem to have much patience with us old folks. Be you thinkin' of stayin' overnight?"

"Yes, we did think of it," answered Chet; "but I don't like to leave this machine outdoors and unprotected."

"You won't have to if you'll run it round behind the stable and down yonder a piece where there's a shed. The shed is fur enough away so you ken put the machine in there without affecting my insurance."

"Oh, well, it's all right, old boy," laughed Arlington. "That settles it. Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

"I didn't say so because you didn't give me an opportunity. You insisted on running in here whether I wanted you to or not."

"Well, forget it; forget it! I reckon we'll put up at your shebang. We want the best rooms you have, and

if there are any little delicacies for the table that you can get hold of, just scratch gravel and secure them. We don't mind what things cost."

Arlington backed up, stopped, opened the door, and let his sister get out without assistance. Directed by Squeers, he ran the machine round past the stable and into the shed beyond.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DISSATISFIED GUEST.

Chester came swelling into the tavern in his pompous way and found Peter Squeers himself behind the desk in his little office.

"You've got a rather bum old place here, my friend," said Chet. "You know we're not accustomed to ordinary accommodations, my sister and I. I suppose we can stand it for a day or so. Give me the register."

Squeers pushed out a long, yellow-leaved grocery book and handed Chester a pen.

Arlington contemptuously tossed the pen aside and took from his pocket a gold-mounted fountain pen, which he adjusted for use.

"I can't write with one of those common things," he said. "They splutter and scratch and exasperate me. I have my own gold stub, which writes as slick as grease. Say, boniface, why don't you get a decent register? Why don't you have a book that's respectable?"

"I never thought of it," answered the landlord. "No one ever objected to that register before."

"Well, you must have a lot of Joshuas stopping here," laughed the insolent lad. "I suppose you do a great business, don't you? You must get as much as a guest a week."

"Oh, we had seventeen last week."

"As many as that? Great Cæsar, you were crowded, weren't you!"

With a flourish the boy wrote his own name and placed his sister's name beneath it.

"Um!" muttered Squeers, adjusting his spectacles

and looking at the names, "'Mr. Chester Arlington,' 'Miss June Arlington.' Arlington? Arlington? Seems to me I've heard that name before. It sounds familiar."

"No doubt of it, old chap. You've heard of my father. He's D. Roscoe Arlington, formerly the great railroad man and Wall Street magnate, now retired. That gives you a tip, mister. Nothing is too good for the son of D. Roscoe Arlington. Assign me the best room in the house and give my sister the next best."

"Did I git that right?" asked Squeers doubtfully. "You mean that I'm to give your sister the best room in the house."

"Now I don't mean anything of the kind! Don't tell me what I mean! I'll tell you what I mean. I want the best room. I may have some friends call this evening, and I propose to entertain them properly. Sister won't mind. She's used to having less than I. It's all right. You do as I tell you. Now call a boy and show us to our rooms."

"I ain't gut no boy, but I'll show you myself," said the proprietor.

They followed him up the stairs, Chet mockingly commenting on the fine elevator, and were finally ushered into connecting front rooms.

Arlington stopped and looked around, an expression of disgust on his face.

"Is this the best you have?" he asked.

"The very best," answered Squeers. "It's the best you'll find anywheres hereabouts, unless it's in Wellsburg. We've had things all fixed up, you see. It's purty comfortable, and I'm ruther proud of it."

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted Chet. "I should think you would be proud! Why, haven't you a private bath?"

"A w-h-a-t?" asked Squeers, astonished.

"A private bath. I always take a dip in the morn-

ing. Why, I don't see even running water. You have an old-fashioned bowl and stand here. This furniture dates back to the flood."

"Now hold on, young man," cried the landlord, exasperated at last. "You're going a little too fur with me! Don't think you can poke fun at Peter Squeers and his tavern all the time. We don't have no private baths in this house, and that washstand is good enough for anybody. I paid seventy-five cents for that bowl and pitcher, and, by jinks, you can't git nuthin' cleaner if you pay seventy-five dollars! We're jest plain, ordinary people here in this town. We don't go round with our chests thrown out and insultin' nobody. I've sorter made allowances for you on account of your sister, who seems like a real lady. But you've gut me disturbed. When I'm disturbed I'm jest a bit unpleasant. If you don't like the accommodations here, the sooner you git out of my house, the better I'll be pleased."

Chet frowned and then he chuckled.

"Well, I suppose we'll have to put up with it, old boy," he nodded. "As long as there's nothing better, I'll manage to scrub along. Ta, ta! Skidoo! Think I'll wash up for dinner."

"Dinner? Dinner don't come again until twelve o'clock to-morrow. We have supper to-night."

"Well, I'll stand for that, too, only be sure that you have plenty of it and the best you've got."

As Squeers was leaving, Chet suddenly stopped him.

"Hold on," he said. "Where's the bell?"

"The bell?"

"Yes. The button."

"The button?"

"Sure. The push button."

"If you want any buttons, I'll ask Mrs. Squeers to send up her button box."

Arlington threw up his hands and dropped on a chair.

"When were you born, Joshua?" he asked.

"My name ain't Joshuay; it's Peter."

"Peter? Great smoke, you're one of the apostles! I knew it! I suspected it all the time! Now, here, Peter, I'll endeavor to elucidate. I'll endeavor to make my meaning clear. Where is the bell by which a guest can call any one in case he wishes service? Where is the electric push button that rings the bell?"

"Oh," muttered Squeers, "so that's what you mean? Why, we don't have nuthin' like that here. We supply everything for our guests right in the room, and they never call for nuthin' more. There's a pitcher full of water, there's towels, there's most everything a human being could want, and it seems to me you ought to manage to get along."

"Talk about the simple life!" laughed Chester. "This is it! Well, now, here, suppose I should want a drink served in my rooms?"

"Well, if you feel that you can't come down for it, I'll send you up a pitcher of ice water."

"Ice water? Who said anything about ice water?"

"You said you might want a drink."

"But I didn't mean water. I do want a drink. I want it now. And I'm the sort of a fellow who wants what he wants when he wants it. Send me up a good snifter of rye whisky, with seltzer on the side."

"We don't keep it."

Arlington gasped.

"You don't keep what?"

"Whisky and that other stuff you mentioned. Even if I had a license and we kept whisky, I don't think we'd have any of them other fancy drinks like that you called for. I wouldn't carry no wines."

"Peter, you're better than a circus. You're really

the simplest Simon I ever saw running a hotel. But, here, do you mean to tell me I can't get a drink of whisky in this shebang?"

"No, you can't get any."

"Well, what the dickens do you do when people want it?"

"They know this is a temperance house, and they never want it."

"Well, I'm different. Just send out to the nearest place where they keep good stuff and get me a quart of rye."

Squeers shook his head.

"I can't do it, sir," he said. "It's agin' my principles."

"Well, wouldn't this trip a dog!" cried Arlington. "If I want to wet my whistle, I've got to hike out and get the booze myself. All right, Peter; I wouldn't jar your principles for anything. Sift along. I'll get what I want later on."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A WHISKY CHASE.

For all of Chet's confidence that he could get what he wanted, he was destined to meet still further disappointment. To his surprise, there was not a single saloon in Bloomfield. On inquiring he learned that the only place to obtain liquor was at the drug store.

With an air of exasperation and command, he strode into the drug store and ordered a quart of whisky.

"You'll have to get a prescription," said the druggist.

"A w-h-a-t?" yelled the fretted youth.

"A prescription."

"Well, wouldn't that bung you in the map! What the dickens do I have to get a prescription for?"

"For the whisky, if you want it."

"But I'm not sick."

"Then you won't get a prescription if you tell the doctor that."

"Say, what kind of a backwoods, jay town is this? On my word, it's the worst I ever saw! Why, this measly little wart of a burg is about two hundred years out of date! If I lived here, I'd be ashamed to look at myself in a mirror! Where does this sawbones live?"

"If you mean the doctor, my flip young friend, he lives up the street about half a mile."

"Half a mile? Well, I'm too weary to perambulate that distance, and my bubble is in the garage of Peter, the Apostle. Oh, say, old man, can't you let me have just a little—just half a pint? My goodness! my neck is so dry it squeaks every time I move my head."

"That's your jaw that squeaks, young man. You've been wagging it too much. This may be a back-number wart of a town, but if you go round telling people so, you're liable to get a jolt."

Chet hunched his shoulders a bit and threw his chin forward aggressively.

"Why, I wouldn't be afraid of any one round here giving me a jolt," he retorted. "Did I call this a back-number wart of a town? I did? Well, you'll excuse me for being too modest. It's a dried-up, antediluvian accident on the face of the earth, and I'd tell you just what I thought about it if I could find the proper words in the English language."

With a contemptuous laugh at the angry retort of the now aroused druggist, Arlington left the store and sullenly returned to the hotel.

He was in anything but a pleasant humor at supper time. When supper was served, some one rang a hand bell, and there was a general movement toward the dining room. Growling at June, who was following him, Chet descended the stairs.

On entering the dining room he found the guests seated at one long table, on which much of the food had been already placed.

"Well, say, what do you think of this?" rasped Arlington. "Do we have to sit down here with this bunch of muckers?"

"Oh, hush—please hush!" whispered June. "I wish you wouldn't talk that way, Chester! Let's not make a disturbance. The table looks very neat and attractive, and the food smells good. I'm hungry. Let's sit down and eat."

"I'm not accustomed to anything like this," muttered Arlington, as he plumped himself down on a chair, without waiting to see that June was seated. "I've heard of these places where everybody makes a

grab for anything they want, and the ones who get there first are all to the good. I beg your pardon, June, for bringing you here."

Directly across the table from Arlington sat an Irishman, who regarded Chester with an expression of great awe. After staring in this awe-stricken manner for some moments, the Irishman leaned toward his right-hand neighbor, lifted his hand with the palm toward the fretful youth, and hoarsely whispered behind it:

"Begobs, it's the Prince of Whales!"

"How do you know?" asked the other man.

"How do Oi know? Don't yez notice th' stoile av him? Don't yez notice th' royal bearing av him? Obsarve the aristocratic look av his mug. Note the indacent manner in which he spakes. By th' harp of Erin, Oi'm overcome intirely to sit in the prisince av the loikes av him."

Arlington did not like this.

"I wouldn't advise you to get gay with me!" he said.

"He spakes to me!" gasped the Irishman. "Holy St. Pathrick! What an honor!"

"I'll do something more than speak to you if you keep this up!" threatened Chet.

This was about the limit for the son of old Erin. Suddenly casting aside his pretended awe, he mockingly observed:

"It's a gintlemon ye are—not!"

"I don't want any trouble with you!" grated Chester.

"It will be no throuble at all, young mon, for me to throw yez out av this room. It'll be a great pleasure to be sure. Me name is Michael Casey, and Oi'm a blacksmith. Av yez kape on makin' chape talk, sure and Oi'll take yez in me two hands and break ye!"

"He'll hurt you, Chester!" whispered June, in great-

est alarm. "Please don't say anything more—for my sake, don't!"

Arlington gave his shoulders a contemptuous shrug.

"Oh, all right, sis," he nodded; "for your sake I won't say anything more, but later I may find a chance to tell this man a few things."

"It won't take yez a minute to tell all ye know," said Casey.

That supper was far from a success for Arlington, although, to tell the truth, the food was excellent and he ate heartily. After finishing, he sauntered out and stood on the hotel steps, with his hands in his pockets, looking the village over.

"It makes me mad if I can't get a drink when I want it," he growled. "Ordinarily I wouldn't think of putting a drink on top of a hearty meal, but, by George! I feel like it now. I hate to be baffled. I can't stand for it. I'm going to get a quart of whisky just to satisfy myself that I can get it."

He ran upstairs for his hat, and June caught him just as he was leaving.

"Where are you going, Chester?" she asked.

"Oh, just out for a little ramble."

"Mayn't I come along?"

"Better not. Sparkfair said he'd run over to see us this evening. You stay here to be on hand if he comes while I'm away. Tell him I'll be back soon."

On the street Chester inquired just where the nearest doctor lived and was given directions. Fancy his disgust after walking to the doctor's house and ringing the bell on being informed that the physician was out and might not return for an hour or two.

Walking back into the village, he entered the drug store. It was a warm night, and the door was standing open. On the steps Chester passed a young man

who, in spite of the warmth, had his coat collar turned up and his hat pulled low over his eyes.

"Say," said Chet, addressing the druggist, "haven't you more than one doctor in this old town?"

"Not more than one regular practicing physician," was the answer. "There's old Doctor Spooner down at the Lower Falls. He doesn't practice much now."

"And have I got to hang around until that other doctor shows up before I can get a prescription that will furnish me with a little booze?"

"I guess you'll have to hang around, and maybe you won't get that prescription then. I'm pretty sure you won't if you talk to Doctor Hamper the way you have to me. It's my opinion that he'll give you a kick instead of a prescription."

"Well, I'd like to see him try it!" snapped Chet, as he turned and left the store.

The same fellow he had noticed on entering was still standing on the steps. This person touched his arm and spoke to him.

"Having a hard time to git a drink in Bloomfield, ain't yer, pal?" questioned the stranger.

"Hard?" raged Arlington. "Hard isn't any name for it! Why, I simply can't turn the trick unless I go in here, knock the proprietor down, and take what I want."

"You seem to want it ruther bad."

"I do. When I can't have a thing, I get fierce for it. I'd give five dollars for a quart of whisky."

"Would yer?"

"You bet your life!"

"Come with me."

"Why—you——"

"I'll git a quart for yer if yer'll give me five. I need the money."

Chester laughed.

"Are you a druggist or a doctor?" he inquired.

"Well, pal, I ain't needer. I jest happened to have a little booze down at me house, and I'm hard up. I've gut to make a raise. When you said you'd give me five for a quart it struck me that we could do business. See?"

"Well, I'll stick by it," chuckled Chet. "Come on. Where'll we go?"

"This way," said the stranger.

And they set off together.

CHAPTER XXX.

CHESTER GETS AN EYE OPENER.

"Say, what's your name?" demanded Arlington, as they walked along together.

"Now never mind my name, pal. That's all right, If I do you this favor, you don't want to go round town blowin' about it?"

"Oh, I wouldn't think of such a thing," assured Chet.

"You're a stranger round here, ain't yer?"

"Sure thing. I don't live here. I wouldn't live here if I had to get off the earth first."

"Well, I dunno's I blame you much. I wouldn't live here if it wasn't for my mother. I ain't living here now, anyhow. Had to dig out a while ago on account of a little piece of business that went wrong. Know anybody around here?"

"Oh, yes, I know a few fellows who are here just now, but the most of them don't belong in this town. They're from Fardale. I know only one fellow who belongs here. His name is Sparkfair."

"Yah!" snarled the stranger. "I know him. He don't belong here. He's jest goin' to school here. He's jest goin' to that old athletic school run by Frank Merriwell. I dunno's I ought to have any particular grudge agin' him, but he sorter done me out of a good snap when they had the three-cornered meet here. I put my wad on another feller, yer see, and this Sparkfair done him. I ain't gut no use for that school nor the gent what runs it."

"Oh, ho!" laughed Chester. "Then you don't love Frank Merriwell a great deal?"

"Not at all, yer bet yer sweet life! If it wasn't fer

him, I wouldn't be sneakin' round me own town this way. If he knowed I was here, mebbe he'd put the sheriff arter me. I s'pose I'm talkin' too much."

"Not to me, not to me," assured Chester hastily. "My friend, you draw me to you. The mere fact that you haven't any use for a fellow by the name of Merriwell makes me admire you. Merriwell! Why, partner, I hate that name! I have good reason to hate it. I don't hold any love for Frank Merriwell, but it's his miserable brother, Dick, that gets all the hatred there is in me. Only for him I'd be a cadet in good standing at Fardale Military Academy to-day. From the moment we first met we've been enemies, and we'll remain enemies as long as both of us are above ground. He has done me no end of dirt, and all I want is the time and chance to retaliate. I'll get there if I live! I'll even up with this Dick Merriwell!"

The stranger grasped Chester's arm.

"I kinder like you," he said. "You're a good hater, and, if there's anything that gets next to me, it's a chap what can hate good and hard. You asked me my name a few minutes ago, and I didn't tell you. I don't mind tellin' now. My name is Kane—Bill Kane. Ever heard it?"

"No."

"Well, you'd 'a' heard it often enough if you belonged around here. Lots of folks here'bouts ain't gut no use for me, and, twixt you and I, I ain't gut no use for them. The most of 'em are hypocritical, psalm-singin' slobs, who think a chap ain't gut no right to take a drink or play a little game of cards or hang round a pool room. They spot him if he does any of these things and say he's bad. I'm called bad, my friend."

"We're getting acquainted pretty fast," laughed Chet. "My name is Arlington. My father is D.

Roscoe Arlington, a retired business man, who, a year or two ago, was one of the big railroad magnates. The gov'nor has gone a bit woozy. I don't mean that he's off his nut—not that. He's sort of lost his nerve. You see he came up from comparative poverty and made his way by determination and brain power until he was pretty near the top. Millions were at his command. But while he was climbing he made enemies who sneaked round behind him with knives up their sleeves. They watched for their chance to knife him, and the chance came at last. When they got at him they struck him good and deep. In a short time his immense fortune melted. Oh, he's not poor now. He's got enough to leave him a rich man if he's willing to be satisfied with retirement. I guess he'll be satisfied, all right. The turn in his luck took the sand out of him, and I feel confident he'll never go into business again. It's kind of pulled me down, too. I used to boast about my father. I used to be proud to say my father was D. Roscoe Arlington, the railroad man. I don't boast about him now. I don't mention him often. As long as he works up the coin for me and lets me go my way, I'm satisfied."

"Well, you're lucky," declared Bill Kane. "My old man never had no money. He allus was poor. He lived poor, and he died poor. They called him shiftless. When I was a little chap they used to point at me and say, 'There goes old Jim Kane's boy.' It riled me when I heard them say that. I gut to hatin' everybody. I knowed they looked on me as no good, the same as my dad ahead of me. It sorter took any ambition I mighter had out of me. I never went to school much. I wouldn't stand it to have the other boys give me the frozen face. I've managed to git along fairly well, without diggin' ditches or workin' on farms. Work and me don't agree. I reckon I've

gut brains enough in my head to slip through life without carryin' round a tired back from wieldin' a shovel or a pick."

"Work wasn't made for gentlemen like us," laughed Arlington.

"I hope yer ain't pokin' fun at me, pal? You've gut the slick way of a gent, but I know I'm no gent. They say real gents eat with their forks and never put a table knife in their mouths. That's what I call work. I wish you'd tell me how in thunder they saw up a beefsteak with a fork! Then I've heard say there's a certain way of eatin' soup. Bah! All them things make me sick! What do they amount to?"

"Well," drawled Chet, "that depends on how a fellow looks at it. Of course society demands certain little things of every well-bred person. Perhaps you're not well-bred, Kane, but that wasn't your fault. Forget it. You're going to hand me up a quart of whisky, and I'm going to cough five for it."

"No, you're not!" exclaimed Kane suddenly. "When we started out I'd 'a' took your fiver, for I told you the truth when I said I wanted money. My old mother lives down here, and I have to look out for her. Since I skipped away from Bloomfield I've been bumping on the rocks. I've been down to hard pan. I'm on my uppers now. That's why I was going to take your five for the quart of whisky. The whisky cost me exactly fifty cents. Give me a dollar for it, and it's yours. I won't take no more than a dollar, for I like you."

"This is so sudden," laughed Arlington.

"With a dollar," continued Bill, "I can buy mother some stuff she wants. I'll raise the next dollar some other way. I'll stick a sucker. You're no sucker."

"Well, I'm glad you don't take me for a sucker."

"Here we are," said Kane, as they turned in at the

broken gate of an old house, in one window of which a light was dimly burning.

Bill produced a key from his pocket and unlocked the door. Together they entered a dark hall, and Kane closed the door behind him, carefully locking it. Then he pushed open another door, and within a squalid room, sitting beside a table on which burned a smoking kerosene lamp, Arlington saw a withered, wrinkled, age-bowed woman.

"That's my mother," whispered Kane, with something like a touch of reverence in his voice. "She's a little hard of hearing, and she don't know we're here. I'll jest speak to her. She's feeling ruther bad to-night. Wait a minute for me."

He entered the room.

Not until he was close to her did the old woman notice him. Then she looked up with a feeble start of surprise and peered at him closely, a smile coming to her aged face.

"Is it you, Billy?" she quavered. "Be ye back so soon, Billy! I didn't 'spect ye now. It was awful lonesome here, but I didn't 'spect ye'd come in much before midnight. Did you git the coffee and sugar for me, Billy? I've gut to have a cup of hot coffee. My nerves are all onstrung."

"I haven't brought it now, mother," he answered, as he clasped one of her hands and bent over her, "but I'll get it a little later. Never you fear, mother—I'll git it. Trust me!"

"I do trust you, Billy, for you're a good boy to your old mother, and you allus keep your promises. Oh, it was fine to see you when you come back home last night! Seemed like you'd been away a whole year. I was jest dyin' to see you, Billy. You don't know how lonesome the old house was without you. When you went away you told me you had business pros-

pects, and you 'spected to make a lot of money. It was hard to let you go, but I didn't want to spile your chances. Arter you was gone some folks come round and tried to tell me you had to git out of town on account of some trouble. I wouldn't listen to them, Billy, for I knowed better. Yes, I was glad to see you when you gut back, even if you didn't make no money while you was away. Money can't take your place with me, Billy. I'd ruther have you than all the money in the world."

"And with a mother like you," said Bill Kane, in a voice literally imbued with affection, "I'm richer than the richest man in all the world. I've brought a friend with me. He's goin' to let me have some money, mother. He's going to make me a little loan. Friends are good things to have sometimes, ain't they?"

"You ought to have a lot of them, Billy. It was good of him to lend ye some money, but I know you'll pay it back."

"Sure, sure," said Kane. "Now you set right here and take it easy while I take my friend upstairs. We want to talk over a little business matter, and as soon as we git through I'll hustle to the village for that coffee and sugar."

"All right, Billy—all right. I hope you don't stay out too late to-night."

"I won't," promised Kane.

Arlington followed the "village sport" up the creaking stairs and into Bill's room, where a lamp was finally lighted. There was a queer look on Chester's face as Kane unlocked a closet door and brought out a flat quart bottle.

"Here's that whisky," said Bill.

"Good!" nodded Chet, as he accepted it.

"Well, I won't swear it's good," grinned Kane;

"but it's as good as you can git around here. One dollar, please."

Chester produced a little roll of bills, from which he removed one.

"Here's ten," he said.

"Ten?" cried Kane. "I ain't gut no change."

"I don't want any change. You take this money, Kane, and buy whatever your mother wants. Nine dollars of it is a loan, and you can pay me when you get ready."

"Well, if you put it that way——"

"I do. I want to tell you something. I've got a mother. I'm her favorite. I suppose she's spoiled me. She's done everything she could for me. I know it. I've never done anything in particular for her. I know that, too. Somehow, a few minutes ago, while you were talking with your mother downstairs, I got a mighty queer feeling. I began to think that I hadn't used my mother just right. Never felt that way before in my life. Perhaps it was a good thing for me to get that feeling. Perhaps it was worth ten dollars to me, Kane. I don't know. Let's have a drink."

Chester opened the bottle, and they took a drink.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A COMPACT.

After that drink they became more sociable and, if possible, more confidential. There was a bond of sympathy between these two lads. Never before had either one of them met a person to whom he so readily and freely opened his heart. In a short time suspicion that secrets thus mutually revealed would prove harmful was cast aside. There was no restraint.

"I'd like to find a way to get at this Dick Merriwell while he's in these parts," said Chet. "You know it hurts that fellow to be beaten at anything."

"He'll stand a chance of getting his bumps at Wellsburg Saturday," asserted Kane.

"Do you think so?"

"Sure. I know it."

"You say sure, but to me there doesn't seem anything sure about it. Farnham Hall defeated Wellsburg, and Fardale beat Farnham twice out of three times. How do you figure it out that Wellsburg has a good show to down Fardale?"

"Well, it's this way," explained Bill: "Them Wellsburg fellows didn't consider Farnham Hall in their class when they arranged to play. They decided that one game would be the limit with Frank Merriwell's team. They sorter reckoned that they would rub it into Farnham Hall so hard in the first game that nobody would want to see a second one. That's where they made their mistake. Later on, I cal'late, they begun to realize they'd blundered, and I bet they wished they'd arranged for the best two out of three. All the same, right straight through to the finish, Wellsburg

reckoned on taking a fall out of Farnham Hall. Even when Farnham went through by defeating county team after county team, the city chaps 'lowed it would be easy to choke these fellers down at the finish. That's where most of the teams made their mistakes. They kept counting Farnham's success as accidental until it was too late for them to do anything for themselves."

Arlington shook his head.

"Your reasoning seems a bit mixed to me," he declared. "When you started out to explain, I fancied you were going to say that Farnham Hall won the county championship by luck, but before you had proceeded far you were confessing that the other teams underrated Farnham."

"It's true both ways," declared Bill. "They did underrate Farnham, and that helped along the accident. I'll bet anything that Wellsburg can eat Farnham Hall up to-morrow or any future date this season. Why, that man, Flick, over there, is a holy terror on the slab. He's a wiz."

"Between you and me, Bill, old boy, Sparkfair is pretty near a wiz."

"Oh, he's good for a feller with no more experience than he's had," acknowledged Kane. "Flick's gut a better head. This Sparkfair's a rattle-brained feller."

"Oh, he's a bluffer," laughed Chet. "He's not half as rattle-brained as he pretends to be. Between us, Bill, he's pretty slick. He's pretty shrewd—he's clever."

"Didn't win to-day, did he?" questioned Bill, with a grin.

"No, but it wasn't his fault. He had a cold clutch on that game up to the seventh inning. He had Merriwell guessing, you bet."

"Did he outpitch Merriwell?"

"Well, I don't know as the score sheet will show that he outpitched him, but you can't always go by the score sheet. I think he did."

"That's nateral," nodded the village sport. "You don't like Merriwell, and you seem to like Sparkfair some. I seen you go through town with a buzz wagon. Who was the skirt you had with yer?"

"That was my sister," explained Chester.

"Well, say, I didn't git a lingerin' look at her, old man, but she appeared to be all the goods."

"Oh, June is good-looking. She looks like me."

"Well, you want to keep an eye on her. The first thing you know somebody'll steal her."

"Oh, yes, I've had to keep an eye on her, all right, all right!" growled Chet. "This Merriwell has been chasing her some time. I don't know what it is girls see in him, but they all go nutty on him. June has had an idea that he was the real thing."

"Has had?" questioned Bill.

"Yes. I hope she's getting it out of her head now since she met Sparkfair. You know Spark is pretty slick himself, and I think he's cottoned to sis. I'm encouraging it all I can. I'm in hopes she cuts Merriwell out for good."

"Now don't you go to encouraging it too much," warned Kane wisely. "It's the worst thing you can do."

"I'd like to know how you make that out."

"It's female nater to be contrary. Tell a girl you've gut a fine feller for her, and she'll grab some other feller. The more you try to push one onto her, the harder she hangs to the t'other one."

"Oh, that may be true in most cases, but I don't believe it's so with June. You know she's only a kid, anyhow, and I don't suppose there was anything serious between her and Merriwell. She liked him, and he

was plumb smitten on her; but she's getting older, and she'll see other fellows she likes as well or better. I think one of those other fellows is Sparkfair. Why, when I get back to the hotel, I expect to find Spark there with her. I shall look for them in the parlor of Peter, the Apostle, and it's more than an even break that I'll find June at Peter's piano, with Dale goo-gooing over her shoulder. But we were talking of baseball. While we talk let's have another nip."

"This is on me," asserted Kane, as Chester started to uncork the bottle.

Bill produced another bottle from the closet, and they had a second drink.

"Ah-h-h-h-h!" said Chester, drawing a long breath, while tears filled his eyes. "That certainly is barbed wire, Kane. It scrapes all the way down, and it burns when it gets there. You were saying you reckoned Wellsburg would take a fall out of Fardale."

"It looks that way to me," said Kane, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand.

"But there's nothing sure about it. If it was a sure thing, I'd try to make a dollar on that game. I need the coin. If we knew Wellsburg would beat Merriwell's bunch, we could both make something."

"I couldn't make a great deal, for I ain't gut enough dough to stick up."

"That's all right, Bill, old man; I'd stake you. No, I tell you what I would do if this was a sure thing: I'd furnish the spondulics, let you do the betting, and give you a rake-off out of the winnings."

"Do you mean that?" asked Kane.

"Sure, I mean it. If I didn't mean it, I wouldn't say so."

"If you feel that way, pal, I'll find a method of fixing the game."

"Tell me how."

"There's more than one way to skin a cat. I know some guys in Wellsburg. I stand solid with a few coves."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, now, for instance, there's Bill Bowers. He's the cleverest umpire in that town, and they git him to officiate at most of the games. He knows the game from A to Z, you bet. Bill and me are good friends. We don't sport round together, but we've set in at a little game of poke' and skinned a couple of suckers. Bill has tipped me off to one or two good things. I'll guarantee that I can fix it up with him so that Wellsburg will win for sure in a close game. That ain't goin' to hurt Bill none in his home town."

"Well," laughed Chet, "it's a good thing to have a little grip on the umpire. If you can fix Bowers and he umpires the game, that'll be mighty encouraging. Still, it wouldn't make the thing safe and solid, for this Fardale bunch might take the game even though the close points all went against them. You ought to have something better than that, Kane, old man."

Kane scratched his head.

"I have!" he finally cried.

"Elucidate."

"What?"

"Fire away. Explain. Go on."

"I know the little chap that brings water to all them games. He's sorter half-witted, but he's foxy jest the same. He blacks boots around town. Once when I was feeling like a millionaire I forked him out a dollar for a shine. Arter that he was ready to do anything for me."

"I'm hazy yet," protested Chet.

"The bootblack's name is Chick Farley. If I was to give Chick a little medicine and tell him to git it into

a dipper of water for a pitcher, I'll stake my pile he'd turn the trick."

Arlington leaped to his feet.

"That's the stuff!" he cried exultantly. "If you can fix it that way and be sure the boy won't blow on you, we can clean up a good roll of the long green."

"I'll fix it," promised Bill.

"All right. Now we're beginning to see daylight. Now it looks like a safe thing. Of course you don't want Chick Farley to dope Merriwell unless it's necessary. I'll get the dope for you. You give it to Farley and instruct him to use it when you tip him off a signal. If you don't have to give that signal, so much the better for us. If you do have to give it, don't hesitate."

"You don't have to worry about me, pal. There won't be no hesitating. How much coin can you raise to back Wellsburg?"

"Oh, I've got a hundred and twenty-five with me. Think you can get any odds?"

"Mebbe I can."

"Well, I'll be in Wellsburg Saturday with my roll. Where'll I meet you?"

"At Priley's Hotel. I'll be there in the billiard hall at ten o'clock in the forenoon. If things are all right, we can go ahead. If they're not all right, I'll tell you so."

"That settles it to suit me," nodded Chet, once more rising. "Now we'll have a final drink, and I'll toddle back to the hostelry of Peter, the Apostle."

"I'll saunter into the village with yer," said Kane. "I've gut to git that stuff for mother."

The moon had risen round and full in the east when they left the house.

"Hello," muttered Kane, as they reached the road, "here's a loving couple taking a stroll this way. This is one of the favorite walks for pairs like them."

Chester placed a hand on his companion's arm.

"Hush!" he said. "That's my sister. She's strolling out with Sparkfair. You can't see Merriwell for dust. He's left at the post. He's out of the race."

The boy and girl who were walking arm in arm along that road did not see Kane and Arlington until close upon them. Suddenly the girl spoke a low word and called her companion's attention to the two boys who were watching them.

The girl's companion had been walking with his head bowed as he talked to her. He lifted his head, and the moonlight fell full upon his face.

An exclamation of surprise and anger broke from Chester Arlington.

"Well, hang me if it isn't Merriwell!" he snarled.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TWO AGAINST ONE.

For a moment Chester was so astounded that he found himself unable to make a move. Recovering quickly, he sprang out and confronted the couple.

"What in blazes does this mean?" he savagely rasped.

"Good evening, Arlington," said Dick Merriwell coolly.

"Satan take you! What are you doing here?" demanded Chester.

"I'm taking a stroll with your sister," was the calm answer.

"Well, you've got a crust! You've got a nerve! Can't you keep away from her? Can't you let her alone? Haven't you decency enough to keep away when you're not wanted?"

"I think I have. When I'm not wanted, I'll keep away."

"Well, you're not wanted, I'll tell you that!"

"But June hasn't told me that."

"That's because she's silly. Look here, June, where's Dale Sparkfair?"

"I don't know," answered the girl.

"Didn't he come to call?"

"He hadn't come when we left the hotel."

"So you didn't wait for him! You sneaked off with this whelp! I didn't think it of you, June! I didn't think you'd treat Dale Sparkfair like that! How did this fellow happen to come around? Did you make a date with him to-day when I knew nothing about it?"

"You're getting very excited and heated, Arling-

ton," said young Merriwell, holding himself firmly in check. "Your language is disagreeable. I don't like it."

"You'll like it less before I'm through with you!" flung back Chet. "Here, June, break away from this puppy. I'll take you back to the hotel. Come, now, I mean business!"

He attempted to place a hand on his sister's wrist, but, quick as a flash, Merriwell thrust him aside.

"You'll excuse me, Arlington, but I'll take June back to the hotel when she's ready to go."

"You—you—you——" panted Chet, and was unable to find a word to express his feelings.

Dick held himself in readiness in case Arlington saw fit to attack him suddenly. It was plain Chester longed to hit the boy he hated, but something kept him from doing so. This something was his respect for Dick's athletic and fighting abilities.

"Don't make a scene, Chester," urged June. "You know Dick and I have been friends for a long time. We've scarcely seen each other of late. He asked me to take a little walk with him, and I consented. I left word at the hotel for Sparkfair to wait if he called."

"Oh, that's fine—that's fine!" snarled Chet. "You left word for him to wait—for him to hang around while you were out spooning with another fellow! That's splendid! You must think him a lobster. You'll find he's no fool. When he learns about this he'll throw you down."

"Throw me down?" exclaimed June. "Why, he can't do that, Chester. We're simply friends—nothing more."

"But I suppose there's something more between you and this duffer? Oh, I like that!"

Bill Kane advanced and was standing near by, with his hands in his pockets.

"Why don't you plug him, pal?" he inquired. "Why don't you plunk him on the kisser?"

"My sister——"

"Well, if you're delicate about that, take your sister away, and I'll plug him."

In a moment Merriwell placed June behind him and faced them both.

"I don't know this friend of yours, Arlington," he said; "but evidently he's a worthy comrade. Perhaps he'd better start in with his plugging."

"That'll be agreeable to me," said Kane, taking his hands out of his pockets. "Take the girl away, pal."

"I won't go!" cried June. "I won't stir! You're cowards, both of you! You're two against one!"

"That's all right," laughed Chester. "He'll deserve all he gets. Come on, Kane; we'll both jump on him."

Dick saw he was in for trouble, and he did not wait for the assault. Instead of that, with a sudden spring, he seized Arlington, getting a wrestling grip on him and suddenly flinging him spinning and sprawling into the ditch.

Dick whirled just in time to meet the rush of Bill Kane.

The young sport made a vicious pass at Merriwell's head, but Dick side stepped and tripped the fellow, sending him prostrate in the dust.

"I don't care to hurt either of you chaps," said Merriwell; "but you're going to be hurt unless you hoist the white flag instanter."

"Nobody ever saw Bill Kane throw up the sponge!" spluttered the village rascal, as he bounded to his feet and came at Dick the second time.

Arlington crawled out of the ditch and hurried forward to take a hand in the encounter.

"We'll get him between us!" he panted. "We'll soak him! We'll fix him!"

Needless to say, June was terrified and distressed, but she could do nothing for Dick. She was compelled to look on helplessly while Merriwell fought his two antagonists.

That fight was short and furious while it lasted. Once Dick was struck a blow that made him stagger, but he recovered before either of his enemies could follow him up, and a moment later he landed such a jolt on Chester's wind that Arlington's hands dropped, and he reeled off weakly to the side of the road, sinking on his hands and knees. This left Dick free to give his entire attention to Kane.

Bill fancied himself a clever fighter, but it was not long before he learned that this boy from Fardale was vastly his superior. The light of the moon was sufficient to enable them to watch each other's movements, and three times Dick avoided being seized by Kane's eager hands. He blocked, parried, sidestepped, retreated, and kept away until the proper opening came. When he did close in, his fists flew like piston rods, and Kane was dazed and stunned by the fury of the attack. Merriwell punched him mercilessly, ending with a powerful round-arm swing that landed on the jaw of the Bloomfield boy and literally hurled him flat upon the dusty grass at the roadside.

Kane was down and out.

Arlington had neither the courage nor the strength to resume the battle, and Merriwell was the victor.

Smoothing out his clothes a bit, Dick turned and offered June his arm.

"Come," he said quietly, "we'll go back to the hotel."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE GREAT BOAT RACE.

Already Dick Merriwell had received his answer from Professor Gunn. The professor gave him permission to remain with the Fardale team and play in Wellsburg Saturday.

The Fardale boys were delighted when Dick brought this word back to the academy that night.

They were enjoying themselves at Farnham Hall.

The following morning all were up bright and early to watch the Farnham lads go through their drills.

At the American School of Athletic Development gymnasium work had been cut down to a low point, but the boys were required to do a great deal of outdoor exercise and drilling.

Not only that, but the foundation for Merriwell's new trades school building was being laid, and the boys were required to do a certain amount of work on this each day.

On this particular Friday, however, Frank Merriwell excused them all from this manual labor, giving them another afternoon to spend as they pleased.

The boathouse and the lake attracted many of them. It was cool and shady down there, and the boys gathered at the boathouse and in that vicinity, where they swam, rowed, wrestled, and enjoyed themselves generally.

With his usual nerve, Arlington put in an appearance about two o'clock and proceeded to make himself perfectly at home. As soon as possible he found Sparkfair, whom he drew aside.

"Thought you were coming over to see June last night, Dale," he said.

"I did," answered Spark.

"You did?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"About eight o'clock. I couldn't get away sooner. Evidently you didn't wait for me. When I reached the hotel neither you nor June were there."

"Oh, yes," nodded Chet, "I had a little business that called me away. Didn't you receive any word from June?"

"No."

"Well, that's mighty queer. That's an oversight on the part of the Apostle."

"The Apostle?"

"Yes, Peter, the main squeeze at Squeers' Tavern. Look here, Spark, you don't want to be so slow."

"Slow? Why, you're the first one who ever called me slow, Arlington."

"You were dead slow last night."

"How's that?"

"Merriwell got ahead of you."

"Did he?"

"Sure thing. While you were taking your time about getting around he hiked over, caught my sister, and went out strolling with her. She left word with Peter, the Apostle, that she'd be back soon, and asked you to wait."

"I didn't get the message," declared Dale. "Are you sure she left word?"

"She told me so, but perhaps she fibbed."

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Spark. "I don't think that. I wouldn't think such a thing of her. It was old Squeers' fault. So she took a stroll with Merriwell, did she? So he kind of stole a lap on me."

"That's about the size of it. Spark, old chap, if you're going to hold your own with that fellow, you've got to be up and doing all the time."

"But I thought you didn't permit her to have much of anything to do with Merriwell."

"I don't when I can help it," confessed Arlington. "You see, I wasn't at the hotel when that slob showed up. If I had been, you can bet your life he'd never done any strolling with sis. I met a friend in town last night and went to call on him."

"A friend? Who was it?"

"Never mind that," laughed Chester. "He's all right, and he's putting me wise to a good thing. If you will promise to keep mum, I'll let you in."

"Oh, I'll keep mum, all right. What's your good thing?"

"Wellsburg is sure to beat Fardale."

"Guess again, Chet! There's nothing sure about it."

"But you don't know, my boy. I tell you it's a cinch."

"Don't let any one string you with such ideas. I've pitched against both teams, and I know that Fardale is just as good as Wellsburg, if not a little better."

"It may seem that way to you, but take my advice and bet your money on Wellsburg."

"Not unless I go bughouse. It wouldn't surprise me to see Merriwell trim those Wellsburgans in beautiful style."

"Look here," whispered Chester, "it can't be done. I'd tell you why if I dared, but I know Wellsburg will win. I can't say any more. If you don't put up a few rusty coppers on Wellsburg, you'll be sorry after the game."

At this point their attention was attracted by a furious wrangling between Hi Bemis and Obediah Tubbs. Looking round, they saw the fat boy, with his

hands on his hips, staring up at Hi, who stood bending over him, glaring down into Obey's eyes. Both boys were flourishing their arms and shaking their fists at each other.

"Why, dern your picter!" spluttered Tubbs. "You ain't no athlete! You're nuthin' but skin and bones!"

"Well, mebbe you think you're an athlete," retorted Bemis, "but you're nuthin' but a tub of mush! Why, I've gut more muscle in my little finger than you've gut in your whole fat body."

"Fat? Fat?" squawked Obey. "Don't you call me fat! I'm well trained down. I'm in fine form. Jest look at yourself in a mirror! By Jim! you've gut to stand twice in a place in order to throw a shadder."

This argument quickly brought a lot of boys flocking around the two quarreling lads, who were egged on by the laughing youngsters.

"Stand up for Fardale, Obey," urged Barron Black.

"Don't let him throw it into you that way, Hiram," came from Bob Bubbs. "Get after him, get after him!"

Ted Smart squirmed through the group and slapped Tubbs on the back.

"You know you're a real Adonis, Obediah," he said. "We all know it! You're trained to such a fine point that you'll have to take on a little flesh pretty soon or you'll blow away."

"Ch-ch-ch-challenge him! ch-ch-ch-challenge him!" chattered Chip Jolliby. "Let's sus-sus-sus-see you two fuf-fuf-fuf-fellows wrestle."

"I ain't no wrestler," confessed Hiram, wagging his head; "but I ken beat him at anything else he'll propose."

"I'll run ye, by Jim—I'll run ye!" squealed Obey.

"All right," said Hiram, "it's a go."

But the boys objected to this.

"Do something that you can do right here," they urged. "If you run a race, you'll have to go over onto the field and do it in the hot sun."

"That's right," nodded Bemis, struck by a sudden idea. "Tell you what I will do, I'll row ye, Fatty."

"Fatty? Fatty?" howled Obediah, getting purple in the face. "Mebbe you think you're a great rower? Jest you git ready! Jest furnish us the bo'ts and see me skim right round him!"

"That's the stuff! that's the stuff!" shouted the boys. "The boats are right here."

"Hold on!" cried Bob Bubbs. "I want to be in this thing myself. You'll have to have somebody to steer, Hiram. Better take me."

"I will," said Hi. "I'll take ye, Bob."

"Although I hate to do it," said Ted Smart, "I'll volunteer for Obediah. Come hither, Bubbs; let's draw apart by ourselves and agree on the fine points of this ceremony. Let's put our heads together and mix things up."

"Not for me," objected Towser. "I'll have nothing to do with Sarah Mony. Sarah's not my style. I'll step aside and consult with you, but we'll not put our heads together. I prefer my own particular brand."

"Oh, you're so funny!" groaned Smart. "You're so hilariously funny that I'm afraid I shall laugh myself to death over your jokes! Observe me laugh."

He pretended to weep.

"Don't laugh so hard," entreated Bubbs. "You'll crack your face."

"That'll be all right if I don't crack your face."

"Hiram can row all round Obediah, and I'll bet on it."

"You're another!" shouted Ted, with pretended anger, as he shook his fists under Towser's nose. "Obey

is a crack oarsman. Every time he rows he breaks an oar or two, so he's a crack oarsman."

"That's the worst I ever heard!" hissed Bob. "What do you call it, anyhow?"

"That's what I said the first time I saw you," flung back Smart. "The moment I clapped an eye on you I cried, 'What do you call it?' "

"Sic 'im, Towser—sic 'im!" urged Berlin Brooks.

For a few moments it seemed that the little fellows would fly at each other, but finally, instead of engaging in an encounter, they locked arms and drew apart, where they stood talking for some moments, with their heads close together. Both seemed very earnest and made many gestures. At last they appeared to arrive at an agreement, whereupon they once more locked arms and rejoined the group of watching lads.

"It's all settled," announced Bubbs. "At least, that's what the egg said to the coffee."

"Yes," nodded Smart, "we have reluctantly decided to act as coxswains for these two great oarsmen. You know there can be no real race unless there are coxswains. We'll get the boats ready. We'll prepare everything, and then we'll call these mighty knights of the shining blade to the struggle."

Although he could not surmise the plot of the little chaps, Sparkfair knew they were up to something, and he joined with others in urging Bemis and Tubbs to accept the self-appointed coxswains.

"All right," said Hiram grimly; "I'm satisfied."

"Well, dern my picter! I ain't kickin'," piped Obediah.

Immediately Bubbs and Smart hurried away to get the boats ready. They dashed into the boathouse, and Towser quickly found two anchors, each having a long coil of rope attached. One of these anchors was placed in the stern of each boat, the ends of the

ropes being secured to the rudder posts. Next they lifted the anchors and dropped them over into the water to a depth of about a foot beneath the surface, making them secure in this manner.

Sparkfair had taken pains to keep Hiram and Obey away while these preparations were going on. When everything was ready the rascally young coxswains gave the signal, and the "rival oarsmen" were hustled onto the float and into the boats, neither of them being given time to inspect things. The boys gathered on the float and on the shore to watch the race.

"I'll act as starter," cried Sparkfair. "Pull out there, you two, and line up."

Bemis and Tubbs set the oars in the oarlocks and pulled out a short distance into the lake.

After much disagreement and fussing, they lined up side by side, and at this point Bubbs and Smart prepared to release the anchors.

"Are you ready?" called Sparkfair.

"Yes, by Jim, I be!" piped Obediah.

"All ready, let her go!" came from Hiram.

"I'll give you the count, and you'll start at the word go," said Dale. "You're to row round the little island down yonder and return to the boathouse. The one who reaches the float first will win."

He lifted his hand as a signal.

"Now!" he cried. "One—two—three—go!"

With the first splash of the oars into the water, Bubbs and Smart released the anchors, doing the trick slyly behind their backs and craftily paying out the anchor lines.

"'Rah, 'rah, for Bemis!" shouted the Farnham lads.

"'Rah, 'rah, for Tubbs!" came from the Fardale crowd.

The boys forged ahead a short distance, but before they were fairly under way the boats were seen

slackening up in spite of the desperate pulling of the two oarsmen.

The anchors were beginning to take hold.

"Dad bing ye, I'll show ye!" cried Obey, as he madly surged at the oars.

"You can't show me nuthin'!" flung back Hiram, also pulling with all his might.

"Come! come!" cried Sparkfair. "Get at it! get at it! You fellows are barely crawling! Do you call that rowing? What's the matter with you?"

All unconscious of the dragging anchors, the two boys pulled furiously at the oars, while the watching lads on the boathouse float literally choked with laughter.

"Don't go so fast, Obey!" implored Smart. "You're taking my breath away!"

"I had a shower bath this morning!" exclaimed Bubbs, as Hiram splashed and threw spray all over the boat. "Tubbs is beating you out, Hi. He's a foot ahead."

"Hang rap it!" grated Bemis. "What's the matter with this old scow? She don't seem to stir!"

"The matter is with you," declared Towser. "Why, you're as weak as a kitten. You're not putting any strength into your strokes. No wonder the boat doesn't move."

"Say," squealed Obey, "be we stuck on the bottom?"

"Stuck?" gasped Smart. "Great ginger! you're fairly flying! You're fairly skimming over the water! I'm dizzy from the speed."

The rival oarsmen began to pant and perspire and get crimson.

"By Jim! it don't seem to me that we're goin' much," gurgled Obey, glancing round toward the boathouse. "We ain't covered more than three rods."

"Well, if you can stand it, I'll have to, even if I

can't catch my breath," said Smart. "Speed up, if you want to. Pull harder, if you care to."

"I'll make her go—I'll make her!" grated the fat boy, as he gave a mighty surge on the oars.

At the same moment Bemis put all his strength into a sudden stroke.

Crack! crack!

Obediah's right oar broke, and almost at the same instant Hiram's left oar snapped.

Over went the fat boy and the tall boy into the bottom of the boats, their heels flying up in the air.

The watching lads screamed with delight over the spectacle.

While Tubbs and Bemis were floundering about in a dazed way, Towser and Ted swiftly pulled in on the anchors, which they lifted from the bottom and deposited in the boats ere the "great oarsmen" could recover and learn what was going on.

When Hiram managed to sit up he uttered a grunt of astonishment, for he found the boat was going backward instead of forward.

"I wisht somebody'd explain that to me," he muttered, in a bewildered way.

"You made a great mistake, Hi," said Bubbs soberly. "You should have turned the boat round the other way. You can row faster stern foremost than any other way."

"By Jim! I busted that old oar, anyhow!" squeaked Obediah. "I guess I'm the winner."

"I declare it a dead heat," laughed Sparkfair. "The race is off. You'll have to settle it some other way."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

READY FOR ACTION.

At the appointed hour Chester Arlington found Bill Kane in the billiard hall of Priley's Hotel, at Wellsburg.

"Well, Bill, old sport," said Chet, "how does the land lay?"

"'Sh!" warned Kane, glancing around and drawing Arlington toward a corner. "It's all right."

"You've fixed it?"

"You bet!"

"Got the umpire cinched?"

"Gut him solid."

"And the water boy?"

"He's mine, too."

"Great work, William. You're a chap after my own heart."

"I know where I can get all the bets I want," said Kane. "Of course, most people here are for the local team, but a lot of sharks, who think themselves very shrewd, have money they're willing to stick up on Fardale. They've doped it all out. They have made their little book to their own satisfaction. You see they figure it like this: Farnham Hall beat Wellsburg, Fardale beat Farnham Hall, and, therefore, Fardale will have a snap with Wellsburg. What astonishes me is the way people count on Dick Merriwell. Just because he's Frank Merriwell's brother, and Frank Merriwell has brought out such a team this season, they have an idea that Dick Merriwell is one of the cleverest articles that ever placed a Trilby on a pitching slab."

"Well, that suits me," chuckled Chet. "Those are the sort of chaps we want to reach."

"Give me the coin, and I'll reach 'em, all right."

Chester fished up a big roll of money.

"Here it is," he said. "This is enough to cover some of their long green. It's all I have. If anything does go wrong——"

"Don't count on that, Arlington. There can't anything go wrong."

"If anything should," persisted Chester, "I'd be plumb busted and more than two hundred miles away from the base of supplies."

"Instead of being busted, you'll add to your wad all right to-day. I'll roam forth now and hook those suckers. See you over at the game this afternoon."

The announcement and advertising of the game had aroused the Wellsburgans who loved the sport, and there was a great rush of fans for the field that afternoon.

At least forty boys from Farnham Hall came over in a body to witness the game, and Sparkfair assured Merriwell that they were there to cheer for Fardale.

"These people over here will find that all the shouting is not going to be for their own team," laughed Dale. "You'll find a fierce bunch of fans here. They're perfectly savage when they get started. They'll do anything to rattle a visiting team. Why, when we played here, the crowd seemed ready to charge onto the diamond more than once. You fellows will have to keep cool."

"And the price of ice is so high this season," smiled Dick.

"One thing," said Dale, "you'll have a corking good umpire."

"Well, that's pleasant. Is he on the level?"

"Seems to be. He knows the game."

"What's his name?"

"Bowers. He's an old-time player. Something of a sport, I understand; but that makes no difference as long as he gives you all that's coming to you."

"That's all we want," asserted Merriwell. "It's all any team can expect on a strange field."

"There he is, now," said Spark, as a thickset, red-faced man walked out from the crowd and spoke to the Wellsburg captain.

Dick surveyed Bowers.

"He may know the game," said Merriwell, "but I'm not at all struck on his looks. Between you and me, Spark, I fancy he's a chap who would make a trade."

"Perhaps that's right," admitted Dale; "but I don't believe these Wellsburg fellows would give him a penny to favor them. They want to win on the level, and all they ask is a square deal from the umpire."

While Dick and Dale were talking, two other boys had met back of the grand stand. They were Kane and Arlington.

"How'd you make out?" asked Chester.

"All right. Every dollar is up. But, say, where's that dope? I forgot about that."

Chester glanced around to make sure no one was watching them, after which he produced a small phial from his vest pocket and slipped it into Kane's hand.

"Here's the stuff," he said.

"Sure it won't damage Merriwell?"

"It'll make him sick as a dog."

"That's all right. I mean, are you sure it won't finish him?"

"Oh, no danger of that," laughed Chester. "He'll recover. The stuff is tasteless. If your water boy can get it into a dipper of water and hand the stuff to Merriwell, the game will go our way without a ques-

tion. But don't work this thing unless you see it's absolutely necessary. Depend on the umpire if Wellsburg gets a lead. If the game is close up to the sixth inning, Merriwell must be plugged with the dope."

"Leave it to me," advised Bill, as he started to turn away. "I'll see you at Priley's to-night. I'll be there about seven-thirty."

The home team had finished practice, and the visitors took the field. Fardale's practice seemed a little slower than that of the locals, but still it was good enough to cause many an anxious spectator to shake his head and predict hot work.

During practice Barron Black wrenched his ankle, and it was necessary for Ted Smart to go in.

Already Merriwell had decided to make a change in his batting order, and the lineup of the two teams, as given to the scorers, was as follows:

FARDALE.	WELLSBURG.
Gardner, lf.	Perkins, lf.
Bradley, 3d b.	Lovett, rf.
Smart, ss.	Boyd, ss.
Darrell, 2d b.	Cooley, 1st b.
Jolliby, cf.	Tindall, 3d b.
Singleton, 1st b.	Soul, cf.
Tubbs, rf.	Barry, 2d b.
Buckhart, c.	Madder, c.
Merriwell, p.	Flick, p.

Wellsburg took the field, and Fardale went to bat.

"Play ball!" cried Bill Bowers, as he tossed out a clean ball to Flick and took his position behind the catcher.

CHAPTER XXXV.

TWO RUNS IN THE FIRST.

Gardner led off with a stinging single.

Sparkfair led the Farnham Hall crowd in a cheer for Fardale.

"Dern our picters!" whooped Obediah Tubbs, as he gamboled awkwardly onto the coaching line. "We're hot stuff to-day! Git a wiggle on you, Earl! Duck off that sack! Be ready to scoot! Bradley will line it out!"

Instead of lining it out, Billy Bradley dumped a little bunt in front of the plate, and Earl easily took second.

Bradley was thrown out at first.

"Good sacrifice, William!" piped Obey. "Here comes our heavy hitter!"

Ted Smart was the next man up.

"I'm so frightened!" he murmured. "I'm so ner-r-r-r-r-vous!"

"Look out for another bunt, fellows!" warned Jack Cooley.

The infielders crept a little closer, and held themselves ready in case Smart bunted.

Ted had taken up on his bat and seemed in form to drop a bunt into the diamond, but when Flick pitched, the Fardale lad tapped the ball just hard enough to lift it over the infield.

Earl Gardner was off on his way to third in a twinkling.

On the coaching line back of third Chip Jolliby danced about in a comical manner, wildly waving his long arms as he stuttered:

"Sus-sus-sus-sprint, Gardner — sus-sus-sus-sprint!

It's a Tut-Tut-Tut-Texas Lul-Lul-Leaguer! Go home, my bub-bub-bub-boy—go home!"

Over third shot Earl at full speed, making a splendid dash for the plate.

Perkins secured the ball and lined it to Madder. On this throw Smart raced on from first to second.

Gardner flung himself feet foremost in a fancy slide and reached the plate in safety. Madder did not try to tag Earl, seeing it was too late to stop the run, but whistled the ball like a bullet into the hands of Barry, who had leaped toward second.

Little Ted Smart's legs were fairly twinkling. At the proper moment, while Tubbs was shrilly shrieking, "Slide! slide!" Ted hurled himself forward and scooted up to the sack, on which his hand was resting when Barry tagged him.

Bowers had rushed toward second, and he was seen to hesitate a moment before giving his decision. In the eyes of most of the spectators there was no question about what had happened at that sack. They knew Smart had reached it safely, and there was no growling from the home team when Bowers declared him safe.

"Sus-sus-sus-say, sus-sus-sus-say," chattered Jolliby, "that's going some!"

Hal Darrell followed Ted, and Flick did his best to fan the dark-eyed lad. After having two strikes called on him, Hal smashed the ball into right field.

Smart saw that Lovett could not catch the line drive, so the little chap was off toward third. Lovett took the ball on the bound and whipped it to first. To many persons it seemed that Darrell reached the initial sack as soon as the ball, if not a little sooner, but Bowers promptly declared it an out.

Sitting on the bench, Brad Buckhart growled.

"That was robbery, partner," he said. "Hal had

that base. How about this umpire? Is he on the level?"

"He's said to be all right," answered Dick.

"Well, I don't like his style any at all. I opine he'll bear watching, and a lot of it."

Jolliby followed Hal, and finally succeeded in batting a daisy cutter out of the diamond.

Pretending to feel very sad and disgusted, Ted Smart trotted home with the second run for the visitors.

Big Bob Singleton walked out with his heavy bat and lifted a long fly toward the far outfield.

After a hard run, Soul captured this fly, which made the third out.

Flick was muttering to himself as he came in to the bench.

"What's the matter, Flick?" questioned Cooley.

"A man never knows what a lot of greenhorns will strike at," said the disgusted Wellsburg pitcher. "Why, some of those fellows connected with balls a foot outside the pan."

The Fardale lads gave Merriwell a cheer as he walked out to the pitcher's position.

"Great Jamaica ginger!" cried Hi Bemis. "That first inning was hot stuff! Did you Wellsburg fellers think you had a cinch to-day? I guess you'll change your minds about that."

"The game has just begun, Bemis!" called a Wellsburg boy, from the bleachers. "Wait till you see what we do to Merriwell!"

Perkins, the lanky, swift runner of the home team, stood forth at the plate, with a confident look on his face, and promptly put up a high fly, which Buckhart smothered.

"Yee-e-e-e-e!" squealed Bemis. "That feller didn't do much, did he?"

Bert Lovett, the second batter, was a good waiter, and he refused to go after Merriwell's wide ones. As a result, three balls were called in succession, and Dick seemed to be "in a hole."

"Got him, Bert!" came from Cooley. "He can't put 'em over! Make 'em be good!"

Like a bullet Merriwell whipped over a straight one.

"One strike!" announced Bowers.

A moment later another straight one followed.

"Two strikes!" came from the umpire.

Again Hi Bemis gave a squeal.

"Jest stand right still, Lovett," he cried, "and you'll have a chance to sit down in a jiffy!"

The batter gripped his slugger and set his teeth. He expected Dick to pitch another straight one, but was surprised when the ball started straight at him. It looked like a slip on Merriwell's part, and Lovett quickly drew back. Too late he saw the ball take a sharp curve. He thought it might pass over the plate. It did pass over the inside corner, but Bowers shouted:

"Four balls! take your base!"

Dick shrugged his shoulders and smiled doubtfully as Lovett trotted down to first.

"Now we're off!" yelled a coacher. "Keep it going, Boyd!"

Boyd swung wildly at the first ball delivered, having been "tipped off" that Lovett would try to steal.

Lovett seemed to secure a good start toward second, but the ball came into Buckhart's hands just right for a throw, and the Texan lined it down without loss of an instant. To the surprise of many, Lovett was caught fully two yards off second and tagged out.

Up popped Hi Bemis.

"It's easy to steal on that feller—I don't think!" he yelled. "Send 'em all down! They can git there if they run fast enough!"

Buster Boyd looked sour and disappointed as Lovett came in from the diamond with his head down.

"I'll have to crack it out," thought the batter.

Merriwell took Buckhart's signal and sent over the combination ball.

Boyd struck under it.

"Two strikes!"

Immediately following this, Dick delivered a slow ball with a speedy swing, and the batter was handsomely fooled, for he swung much too soon.

"You're out!" said Bowers, as the ball landed in Buckhart's mitt.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RAGGED UMPIRING.

Flick was on his mettle when he entered the box the second time. Already this clever Wellsburg pitcher had been "approached" by "scouts" from several of the big colleges, who were anxious to secure him when he should leave Wellsburg. His reputation as a most remarkable young pitcher had gone far afield.

No wonder he was irritated, for he realized that these "kids" from Fardale had "worked him" very cleverly in the first inning, their skill in securing two runs being little short of professional in its caliber.

At the beginning of the game Flick had felt inclined to sneer at the visitors, but this feeling was rapidly melting into respect. He again toed the slab, and in his heart there was a determination to show the visitors that they were "not so much."

"Come, Flicker, old man," shouted a voice from the crowd, "show them what you're made of!"

Flick was chewing gum. He balanced himself with his toe on the slab and surveyed Obediah Tubbs.

"Put her right over," invited Obey, with a moon-faced grin. "There ain't no danger. I can't hit any, less I shet my eyes."

"Get back a little or I'll bust that bay window of yours!" said Flick, motioning Tubbs away from the plate.

"Never mind the bay winder!" retorted Obey. "If that projects, it ain't my fault. My feet are fur enough back."

This answer annoyed Flick, who decided to drive the fat boy back, and promptly delivered a ball for the inside corner.

Too late Obey seemed to realize that the ball would not curve, for when he made a move to dodge he did not have time to get out of the way. He was struck glancingly on the stomach, whereupon he dropped his bat and started for first.

"Back! back!" commanded Bowers.

"W-h-a-t?" squeaked Obediah. "He hit me!"

"You didn't try to get out of the way," said the umpire."

"By Jim! I didn't have time."

"He told you to stand back from the plate."

"And I told him my feet was back the proper distance."

"That'll do for you!" growled Bowers. "I'll put you on the bench if you make any more talk to me!"

Immediately Merriwell advanced toward the umpire.

"Mr. Bowers," he said quietly, "you have a good reputation as an umpire. I'm not going to put up an argument with you at present. Still, I want to tell you that we propose to have our just dues here. That batter was standing in his box. The pitcher attempted to intimidate him by throwing a swift one at him. The batter is entitled to his base."

"Now, you hold on!" grated the umpire, glaring at Dick. "Don't you tell me what is right! If you do, I'll put you on the bench, too!"

"When you do that we'll all take the bench until they give us an honest umpire," said Merriwell.

"And you'll lose your guarantee, as well as the game. I'll forfeit the game to Wellsburg. Cooley won't pay you a cent."

"As far as the guarantee goes, it wouldn't ruin us to be robbed of that in the manner you mention, Mr. Bowers. Wellsburg could be as proud as she pleased over a game won on such forfeit. Now, see here, at the next sign of interference I'll protest to Cooley

and the Wellsburg management. If they don't see fit to give us a square deal, the crowd will be disappointed, for the game will stop right there. That's all I have to say."

Dick's eyes were flashing, and they looked straight into those of the crooked umpire, who found himself unable to return that glance.

"Put him out of the game, Bowers—put him out!" howled an excited spectator.

But the umpire simply cried:

"Play ball!"

"Go ahead, Obey," directed Merriwell quietly. "You've been robbed of a pass to first, but I don't think it will happen again."

Tubbs, usually jovial and laughing, now looked comically savage as he resumed his position in the batter's box.

Flick grinned in a sickly way, hunching his shoulders and teetering on his feet while Madder crouched behind the bat and gave a signal.

Whiz! a high one came over.

"One ball!" droned Bowers.

A sharp drop followed, and Obediah struck over it.

"Strike one!" came from the umpire.

Immediately following this, Tubbs caught a sharp shoot on the end of the bat and smashed it on a line into the right field.

Bert Lovett made a handsome running one-hand catch.

"Great horn spoon!" exclaimed Buckhart. "That's another robbery! It looked like a clean two-bagger."

The Texan stepped out and waited until Flick cut a corner. Then Brad laced a furious grounder out of the diamond and reached second by great running.

The exasperation of Flick grew apace. Could all these boys connect with the ball? It began to look

that way. And the lanky pitcher swore softly to himself.

The Fardale lads rose in a body and gave Merriwell a cheer. Dick responded by dropping a little bunt toward first and then making a sensational run that landed him on the sack, while Buckhart reached third.

Between Dick and Brad signals were exchanged. Earl Gardner observed those signals and knew what they meant.

"Don't try to steal second, captain!" implored Ted Smart, who had taken the coaching line. "You can't do it, you know! Stay right where you are! Don't get off that cushion! Don't take a lead! We don't want any more runs!"

This was the little fellow's back-handed manner of urging Dick to steal.

After holding Merriwell as close to first as possible, Flick whipped over a high one for Gardner. Earl swung at it with no desire to connect.

Merriwell was off toward second, and Madder lined the ball down. Even as the catcher made that throw Buckhart went leaping from third along the line to the pan. Boyd cut in ahead of Barry, took the ball, and relayed it back to the plate. Madder put it onto Brad as the Texan slid across the plate.

It was very close, and had Bowers followed the umpiring rules, which say the runner should be favored, he would have declared Buckhart safe. Nevertheless, he promptly pronounced it an out.

The point was so fine that the visitors could not claim unfairness, yet it was evident to every unprejudiced observer that Bowers did not intend to show the strangers any favors.

"I certain don't wonder any that Wellsburg wins at home!" muttered Brad, as he seated himself on the bench. "It's mighty hard beating the umpire."

"You fellers have gut to go some if you don't want to be robbed to-day!" shouted Hi Bemis, whose disgust would not permit him to keep still.

Gardner compelled Flick to put one over and smote the ball full and fair, lifting it far into left field. Perkins was there, however, and scooped the fly.

Merriwell improved the opportunity to speak to Cooley.

"What do you think of this umpire, Captain Cooley?" he asked.

"Why, he's a good man," said Jack. "He's always given satisfaction here."

"Put yourself in my place," invited Dick. "Would you be satisfied?"

"That was a close call at the plate," acknowledged the Wellsburg lad. "But can you say your man was safe?"

"It looked that way to me."

"You were running bases."

"Well, pass that over. You know Tubbs should have taken first when he was hit by the ball."

"I suppose Bowers thought he let the ball hit him on purpose."

"He was in his box. Cooley, I want you to speak to the umpire. We're here to play ball, but we're not here to be robbed. I should hate to disappoint this crowd by taking my team off the field, but I'll do it the moment I'm thoroughly satisfied that this umpire means to steal the game. I've been led to understand that you're a square man and that you have no desire to win games unfairly."

"I'll speak to him," promised Cooley.

He did so, warning Bowers to give the visitors everything they deserved. Of course, the umpire protested that he would not think of doing anything else.

Cooley led off in the second with a safe hit, while

Tindall followed with a bunt, and was thrown out. Soul tried hard for a hit, but Dick's cleverness proved too much for him, and he could not connect. He was struck out, with Cooley still lingering at second.

Barry hit one into the diamond, and Darrell managed to cuff it down. Nevertheless, Hal could not get hold of the ball in time to throw Barry out. Cooley went to third. On the first ball pitched to Madder, Barry was away toward second.

Apparently Cooley was holding himself poised to dash for the plate if Buckhart threw to Darrell. Nevertheless, without an instant's hesitation, Brad lined the ball down. Smart got in ahead of Darrell as if intending to take the throw and return it to the plate.

Cooley had made a fake start for home, but turned back as he saw Ted making that cut.

Instead of taking the ball, Smart ducked, held his hands apart, and let the sphere go on to Darrell, who received it cleanly and nailed it onto Barry as the latter slid. Hal poked the ball into Barry's ribs so fiercely that the man was checked in his slide and held with his fingers fully six inches from second.

Bowers had rushed down toward second, but he paused a moment before giving his decision.

There was a hush, for the majority of the spectators could see that Darrell had caught the runner, beyond question.

"You're out!" announced the umpire. But in his voice there seemed a touch of regret.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DOPED PITCHER.

During the concluding half of the fifth inning there was great excitement, for the locals found Merriwell for three safe singles, scoring a run and landing two men on bases with no one out. The Wellsburgans believed their time had come, and they howled like a lot of maniacs.

Fardale cut their jubilation short, for Merriwell struck out a man and forced another to put up an infield fly, while the third died on a high foul that was gathered in back of first by Singleton.

Fire flashed in the first of the sixth, for Fardale fell onto Flick in a determined manner. When the smoke cleared away the visitors had sent three men over the plate.

Out behind the bleachers Bill Kane met Chick Farley, the water boy. Chick was on his way to bring a bucket of water.

"Here, you," hissed Kane, "it's your move! Git that dope into Merriwell as quick as you can! See?"

"Sure," nodded the boy. "He'll have to wet his whistle pretty sonn. I'll fix him."

The sixth passed with no more runs for Wellsburg. Flick was invincible in the seventh.

As Merriwell left the bench to pitch he started toward the water bucket.

Chick Farley was watching, and he promptly scooped up a dipper of water, into which he slyly dropped some of the stuff provided for him.

"Here you are, sir," he said, as he held out the dipper to Merriwell.

"Lead me to it!" exclaimed Flick, as he trotted in

and took the dipper out of the boy's hand before Farley could realize what was happening.

Among the spectators two persons nearly had heart failure as they watched the Wellsburg pitcher eagerly swallow the contents of that dipper.

Merriwell stood, with his hand on his hips, smiling slightly at the impoliteness of the local pitcher.

"Excuse me," said Flick, smacking his lips. "I didn't notice you, Merriwell. Were you after a drink?"

"That's all right," said Dick, accepting the dipper from Flick's hand and throwing out the small amount of water that remained in it. "I suppose this is a dry game for you."

Then he dipped his own water from the bucket and drank.

Imagine the feelings of Chester Arlington. Imagine the rage of Bill Kane. No wonder Chick Farley looked dazed, and temporarily forgot his duties as water boy when still other players came up for drinks.

It did not take Arlington and Kane long to get together. Bill followed Chet to a secluded spot behind the grand stand.

Chester was livid with rage.

"A million furies!" he panted. "Did that boy dope the water Flick drank?"

"I guess he did," admitted Kane. "He thought Merriwell was going to take it."

The language which came hissing from Chet's lips will not be printed here. For a few moments he was literally beside himself with rage.

"You've done a fine job!" he snarled. "Your fool water boy is a dandy! Why didn't he throw that water out when he saw Flick was going to take it?"

"Guess he didn't have time," said Kane.

"And your old umpire's no good! Oh, this is a fine job!"

"Bowers has done his best," declared Bill. "He couldn't be no rawer than he was. Why, even Cooley gave him a call."

"Well, I'm soaked—I'm busted! Fardale will win! Every dollar I had is gone! What in blazes am I going to do?"

"Mebbe Fardale won't win."

"Oh, yes, she will—yes, she will! She can't help it now! Blazes! that's Merriwell's luck. It sticks by him. I swear I can't stand to watch any more of this game!"

At this point there was a great cheer from the Wellsburg crowd, and the two baffled schemers hurried back to see what had happened.

With two men out, a Wellsburg batter had driven a three-bagger into the field. Nevertheless, the joy of the locals was short-lived, for Merriwell struck out the next man, and the seventh inning was over.

"I'm feeling mighty queer," muttered Flick, as he entered the box. "Wonder what's the matter with me?"

He was dizzy and somewhat nauseated. Nevertheless, he managed to get through the inning with the aid of good luck, for, although three men hit the ball, not one of them hit it safely.

Cooley implored his men to do something in the last of the eighth. The game was nearly over, and Fardale had a lead of four runs. Plainly Merriwell intended to hold that lead, for his pitching was up to the best of his ability, and not a Wellsburgan reached first.

As the home team started for the field in the first of the ninth, Flick attempted to rise from the bench, but fell back with a groan.

"What's the matter?" asked Cooley, in surprise, noting for the first time that the pitcher was white as a sheet.

"I'm sick!" groaned Flick. "I can't see! Something's the matter with me! I can't get up!"

There was some delay at this point, and finally Cooley called for his second pitcher, Sprawl, to warm up. The visitors waited without the slightest show of impatience while Sprawl limbered his arm.

Flick was led off the field between two friends.

Sprawl did handsome work in the box, although he struck no one out. The three men who faced him could not hit safely, and Wellsburg came to bat for the last time.

It happened that Sprawl led off, and he opened with a screaming two-bagger that brought the great crowd up with a mighty yell.

Merriwell was cool as a cake of ice when Perkins stepped into the batter's box. On the coaching line Cooley danced and chattered, urging Perk to keep up the good work.

Perk hit a weak grounder to Merriwell, who held Sprawl at second and threw the batter out. Lovett was fooled with the combination ball, and fanned the air.

Dale Sparkfair called on the Farnham Hall boys to rise, and they stood in a body while they chanted "The Merry Boys" song.

With his mouth dry and his eyes staring, Chester Arlington watched Dick Merriwell deceive Boyd, who failed utterly in judging the shoots and benders handed up by the Fardale pitcher.

The Farnham lads roared joyously as Dick finally struck Boyd out and ended the game.

"What's the matter with that fellow?" asked more than one of the spectators, as Chester Arlington savagely thrust aside every one in his path, making a rush for the gate. "He's crazy!"

Snarling, almost frothing at the mouth, Chester left the field, penniless and far from home.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN DISGRACE.

"Chester Arlington!"

The voice of Professor Darwin Glidden—"Old Prexie"—sounded sharp and stern in the silence of the crowded classroom.

There was a pause, and many eyes were turned in the direction of the desk at which sat a calm, undisturbed, cool-faced boy. This boy seemed utterly oblivious that his name had been called.

"Chester Arlington!"

This time the professor's voice was harsh and stern.

Slowly the cool-faced boy lifted his eyes, his eyebrows went up a bit, and he calmly answered:

"Sir?"

Old Prexie's face flushed, and there was a dangerous glitter behind his spectacles.

"Stand forth, Arlington!" he commanded. "Come to the desk."

With a slight shrug of his shoulders and an expression of weariness, the boy rose and slowly walked down the aisle, pausing in front of the principal's desk.

The old professor thrust his spectacles up onto his forehead, and his eyelids narrowed as he sat looking straight at the boy who unfalteringly returned his gaze.

"Where have you been, Arlington?" demanded old Prexie, his voice rasping like a harsh file. "You've now been absent a full week."

"Exactly a week, sir, I believe," nodded the boy.

"Where have you been?"

"I've been away, sir."

"That's not answering my question. I know you've been away. I wish to know where."

"You'll excuse me, sir, if I do not answer."

"Yes, I'll excuse you," retorted Professor Glidden; "I'll excuse you for the remainder of the present term!"

Again the boy shrugged his shoulders.

"Arlington," the exasperated principal went on, "you have repeatedly absented yourself this term without permission. At times you had absolutely no excuse for those absences. You were warned that such conduct would not be tolerated further. Discipline is something I insist on at Fairport Academy. Since entering this school you've never shown yourself properly amenable to discipline. You have been willful in your conduct and persistent in breaking the rules of the school. At the repeated solicitation of your mother I have overlooked many things in you. The time has come when I cannot continue to overlook such behavior, as it not only injures you, but it sets a bad example for others. You left school on Wednesday of last week without asking permission and without taking the trouble to notify any one that you were going. You have returned with no excuse whatever, and, therefore, it is my duty to suspend you. You may consider yourself dismissed for the remainder of the term."

Arlington actually laughed outright.

"Oh, very well," he retorted. "That doesn't jar me a bit."

Professor Glidden rapped his desk and cried:

"Silence! No insolence, young man! Not a word, sir!"

"You can't muzzle me, professor," said the boy, "and you can't frighten me by snarling at me. You may suspend me as much as you like and as long as you like, and I'll——"

"Silence!" again cried the exasperated man, as he rose to his feet and glared down at the insolent lad. "I've never had a boy talk back to me in this room, and I won't——"

"There's a first time to everything, Professor Glidden. Keep your collar on."

At this, every boy present caught his breath with a gasp. They were astounded at the nerve of the brazen lad who so indifferently faced the outraged principal.

"This old school is supposed to be up to the times," Arlington hastily went on, "but it's about a thousand years out of date. In athletics, as well as in other matters, it's a moss-covered back number."

It seemed that Darwin Glidden would descend from the platform and lay violent hands on this boy, but the old professor held himself repressed, although the flush left his face, and he grew almost chalky white.

"Arlington," he said, his voice as cold as the ring of steel, "I shall change my decision. You are not suspended. You are expelled! You will leave this room at once, and you will remove yourself and your belongings from Fairport Academy without delay. Go, sir—go!" One quivering finger pointed straight down the aisle toward the door.

"I'll go—with pleasure!" smiled Chester, as he contemptuously turned away.

Professor Glidden stood like a statue as the expelled lad deliberately sauntered down the aisle to the door, where he paused, turned with a flickering derisive smile, and then passed out.

Thirty minutes later Rand Blacklock found Arlington humming "How'd You Like to Spoon With Me," as he was packing his trunk in his room. Blacklock entered, closed the door, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and grimly surveyed Chet.

"You're a blamed fool!" said Rand.

"Many thanks," returned Chester, when he had finished the chorus of the song. "There are others."

"Now, don't throw that bluff at me!" snapped Blacklock. "You're expelled, man—you're expelled! You're disgraced!"

Chester threw back his head and laughed.

"Disgraced?" he cried, with apparent great amusement. "Disgraced in being fired out of a rotten old school like this? Come off, Rand!"

"I say you made a fool of yourself," the dark-faced lad persisted. "You could have fixed it up with old Prexie. Your mother might have interceded."

Arlington snapped his fingers.

"Didn't want to fix it," he asserted. "I wanted to get out."

"Then why didn't you stay away? Why didn't you get out of your own accord, instead of coming back here to be expelled?"

"Oh, I had a reason for that. My old man wouldn't let me stay away, you see. If I'd tried that, he'd sent me back here, anyhow. The only way for me to break loose from Fairport was to throw it into Prexie until he kicked me out bag and baggage. Had I simply accepted suspension, the gov'nor would have romped me back here at the beginning of next term. I didn't propose to come. Do you follow me, Rand?"

"Why the dickens were you so anxious to get away from Fairport?"

"Why the dickens should I stay here? What's here to keep me? I came here for a purpose. This school seemed to be Fardale's strongest and most prosperous rival in athletics. Eaton's day was past. Eaton's sun was sinking. Fairport seemed coming to the front. I believed there was a fine show for Fairport to down

Fardale on the diamond, the track, the gridiron, and in other lines. You know there was such a prospect. Between you and me, Fairport might have put it over Fardale had things been handled correctly here. It was my one ambition to rub it into Dick Merriwell good and plenty. Had these Fairport chumps given me the opportunity I desired, I'd succeeded in that ambition, you bet your life. Instead of giving me sufficient authority, these idiots began to wrangle and get mixed up and pull and haul until no one knew where he was at. They refused to unite and work diligently for the purpose of soaking Fardale. A lot of envious chumps improved every opportunity to knock me. I got the best of them in several matters, but the school remained divided, and 'a house divided against itself cannot stand.' Had they made me captain of the nine this spring, with full authority, and then supported me loyally, Fairport would be in Fardale's shoes to-day, and Fardale has the baseball championship cinched. You know I'm giving you hard facts, Blacklock. You know what I say is true."

"Oh, it's possible things might have gone differently," admitted Rand; "but you were still in the ring, and you'd had another opportunity. It's my opinion you might have carried your schemes through on the gridiron in the fall."

"Bah! Rot! Nothing of the sort! There was no show for it. I thought there was at one time, but Castle won out in the end and was appointed captain of the eleven. It was not Castle's cleverness that did me up. It was the crafty work of his roommate, old Smooth and Silent."

"You underrated Smoot Ensolent," asserted Blacklock. "You regarded him with contempt. You called him old Stick-in-the-Mud. That fellow's a bad man to arouse."

"Who suspected it?" demanded Chet. "He's always been a grind, and he never took much of any interest in athletics."

"But he's a politician. He knows how to pull the wires. It was his wire-pulling that landed Castle on top."

"Admitted. I don't often make such a mistake, but I did underrate Smooth and Silent. He worked like a beaver to trip me, and he succeeded. I have it all down in my little notebook. The opportunity to get back at him may never come, but if it does, just watch me flatten him out. At present twenty-three for me."

"Well, I'm mighty sorry," muttered Blacklock, sitting down, with a disconsolate air. "I'll miss you, 'Arlington. What are you going to do, anyhow?"

"Oh, I'll find enough to do. I have a little scheme in my head. You know I had another bump while I was away. Took my sister and drove to Bloomfield to see Sparkfair's team take a fall out of Fardale. I told you about Sparkfair, didn't I?"

"Oh, yes. You seem stuck on the fellow."

"Not exactly that, old man. He's all right in his way, and he is a rattling good pitcher. I give him that credit. I think he's a better man on the slab than Merriwell. The trouble was that his team couldn't play the fine points quite as well as Merriwell's. Fardale took that game. Then Wellsburg challenged Fardale, and I stayed over to see the thing through. Ran across a young chap who knew the ropes, and he felt sure that he could fix it so Wellsburg would be the winner. He stood in with the umpire and had a pull with the water boy. I furnished him with some dope, which he gave the water boy for the purpose of putting Merriwell to the bad. Talk about luck—Merriwell's certainly is *it!* When the water boy attempted to hand the dope out to him, the Wells-

burg pitcher just sifted in and took that water himself. You can imagine the sort of a paralytic stroke that I had. Every dollar I possessed was up on Wellsburg. Of course, Fardale carried off the game, and there I was, busted—busted and two hundred miles away from home!"

"What did you do?"

"Oh, I had gasoline enough to get back to Bloomfield, and I borrowed a little money from Sparkfair. Then I wired my mother to send me fifty. Instead of sending the money, she came on. She got struck on Bloomfield, which is developing into a summer resort. The old lady found a lot of land that just suited her, and it didn't take her long to buy it. She's going to put up a cottage there. You see the gov'nor's tried to get her back into the country where they came from originally, but she won't stand for that. She's too proud to go back there and settle down, but she will settle in Bloomfield. She thinks the old man will come round and accept the inevitable."

"But what'll you do in Bloomfield?"

"Bloomfield is not so very far from Wellsburg. That's a hot little city, and it just about suits yours truly, Chester Arlington. I'm going to get into the school there, which is a bright and pleasing prospect, I assure you. A little dried-up village like this isn't roomy enough for me. Every time you bat your eye somebody knows it and reports you. I can have more fun in Wellsburg. I tell you what, Rand, I don't see how you stand it here."

"Well, I don't believe I'll stand it very long after you're gone, Chet."

"Why don't you break away and come to Wellsburg with me? Together we can stir things up there. We'd make a hot team. It's a great idea, Blacklock, old pal."

Rand shook his head doubtfully.

"I'm afraid I can't work it. I'm afraid my people won't stand for the shift."

"Work it? Why, work it the way I did, if you can't do it any other way. Get yourself bounced."

"I don't like that scheme. If I should do such a thing, my people would froth."

"Let 'em froth. My old man will froth some himself. Think it over, Rand. I'm going to finish this packing now. I'll come after my stuff at noon."

During the noon intermission Arlington drove up to the academy in his mother's automobile, having a man at his side. This man brought out Chester's trunk and luggage, which were deposited in the rear part of the tonneau.

A lot of the boys stood around, watching these movements. When everything was ready for departure, Arlington turned and surveyed his late schoolmates.

"I'm sorry for you fellows," he said, with a sneering laugh. "You'll get the dry rot here. This school never will be anything more than it is, and it isn't much. Fardale will trim you next fall, Castle. You're a sloppy poor man to captain the eleven. As for you, Kilmer, you never were anything but a big blowhard. Gibbs looks like the dried-up prune he is. There's Hazen—handsome Dashing Ned—ha! ha! ha! —good looks and brains seldom run together. Billy the Brick is securing a fine education—to carry a hod. Potts, you should learn to play poker before you try to play it. You're a sucker. Old Stick-in-the-Mud knows just about enough to play the snake and no more. My sincere disregards to all of you!"

With this he started the motor, turned the car, and bowled away, regardless of the derisive shouts and groans flung after him.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A SNAKE STORY.

Chester was driving toward Fardale and cursing the roads when ahead of him he espied a figure trudging along on foot. Drawing nearer, he saw that the foot traveler was a short, compact person in knee breeches, pink shirt, and golf cap. The wayfarer carried his coat on his arm.

Chet sounded the Gabriel horn.

Instantly the stranger gave a leap and turned a cart wheel into the middle of the road, flinging his coat into the air. As he came erect, he turned with a jerk, brought his hand up into a salute, and stood there squarely in the center of the highway.

Again Chester sounded the horn.

"Out of the road, you lubber!" he shouted.

Instead of obeying, the man stood like one rooted to the spot, forcing Arlington to throw out the clutch and put on the brake.

"Lubber me no lubbers, my gallant tar!" cried the swarthy little chap. "Many a time and oft have I coasted the briny deep from Bangor to Boston, and the smell of salt still lingers in my raiment. In my palmy days little did I wot that I should come to this. Little did I dream that I should find myself segaciating wearily along the hard and hubbly highway with my Trilbys so tender that they tickle me to tears at every toddle. I'm aweary and afar from port. Wouldst take me aboard, O gentle stranger? Wouldst carry me carroling carelessly into the distant henceward where lieth lands unknown? If you couldst but gaze on the blisters on my heels and bunions on my big toe joints, you would be melted with compassion."

Chester leaned forward and removed his goggles to get a better look at this queer individual.

"Seems to me I've seen you before," he said.

"I doubt not the correctness of your supposition. I am famous—likewise infamous—from Eastport to the Golden Gate. Those who have never seen me have lost an excruciating amount of pleasure."

"Is your name Wiley?" asked Arlington.

"You've made fast to my mooring," was the answer. "I am the only and original Cap'n Wiley, windjammer, adventurer, baseball player, and busted bubble of fate."

"Well, what the dickens are you doing here?"

"Ask me not, O gentle stranger, for I have meditated long and sadly on that problem. I'm adrift in this dreary world, and without my instruments I can't get my bearings. I'm not walking for my health. Already I have health to spare. I've set my course for Fardale, where I hope to arrive, if the place hasn't moved."

"Get in here," invited Arlington.

After a clattering, horse-galloping patting of his hands on his knees, Cap'n Wiley caught up his coat, flung it over his shoulder, danced on his toes to the side of the car, and lightly sprang up beside Chester.

"Hoist anchor and put on steam," he chuckled. "Let the old buzz wagon buzz."

Arlington advanced the spark, opened the throttle, starting on the low gear, and then throwing in the clutch.

"I'm rather surprised to run across you like this, cap'n," he said.

"I'm surprised to run across myself like this. It's a painful humiliation to me."

"I supposed you were playing ball on some fast team this spring."

"Don't!" entreated the sailor, with a sob; "don't jab the tender hooks of my feelings in such a ruthless manner! I've been playing ball, but I'm too good for it."

"Too good?"

"Yea, verily, even so-so. I have broken up three leagues this spring. When a man gets so good that he can play the whole game alone, what chance hath his humble antagonists? Notice that I said humble, not 'umble. 'Umble used to be the correct pronounciation, but with my aid the Century Dictionary changed it to humble. I'm great on the English language. There's only one man that can stagger me. Henry James can write more English that needs translating than any living man, and I'll take off my chapeau to him."

"You must be hard up, cap'n, or you'd not hit the pike afoot."

"Alas and alack, you have guessed the truth. Yet only this past weary winter I was literally rolling in wealth. I had so much money that I couldn't count it. The dread that I would not be able to spend it all caused me hours of intense anguish. But riches have wings, and here I am. I'm looking for another opening.

"Wouldst hear how I accumulated this stupendous and colossal fortune? It happened down in Bangor. The day I struck that town I was as dry as a turnpike on the Fourth of July. It was shortly after County Attorney Patten started on his wild and tumultuous career enforcing the Sturgis Law. For the first time in years Bangor was up against it. All my old resorts were closed. I couldn't even smell a barroom as I preambulated along the streets, and any one who knows Bangor must realize what a horrible change had taken place there. In former days a stranger who

wished to gargle his throat could sift out upon the street, sniff the atmosphere, and follow the odor straight to a gin mill. I pounded my hoofs all over town, looking for a quart or even a measly pint. I found the old-time bars transformed into soda fountains, and I was getting so parched that there was absolute danger I would crack open.

"At last I found the City Liquor Agency, but even there I could not get a smell. I pleaded in vain until the agent informed me of the only course to be pursued. If I wanted a drink, I'd have to be bitten by a snake. It happened that there was a circus in town, and I made a bee line for the circus grounds. In the tent of a side show they had some beautiful rattlesnakes. Without delay and regardless of the cost, I purchased the biggest rattler in the bunch. The old boy had been kept on ice, and he was a trifle dormant, so I carried him off in my pocket as I again hied my steps toward the Liquor Agency. Arriving once more at the agency, I produced my snake, placed him on the counter, and proceeded to tickle him until he sounded the alarm and inserted his back teeth in my wrist. The agent gave me two quarts if I'd get out and take the rattler with me.

"I woke up the next morning with the rattler sweetly slumbering on my chest, my trunk having been detained on excess baggage charges at the depot. Somehow he seemed friendly toward me. I had a burning thirst, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I could induce him to even taste of me again. After a while he nibbled gently, and with the aid of that nibble I secured another supply of ardent. That day I dreamed great dreams. I evolved a scheme whereby I could gather in a few spondulix. On the following day I opened a store next door to the Liquor Agency. Above the door of my new place of business

I suspended a sign with this legend: 'Snake Bites $5.00 Each.'

"Five minutes after I hung out that sign the first thirsty pilgrim put in an appearance. I sicked the rattler at him, and he coughed up his five before gamboling away to the agency for a supply of antidote. That was the beginning. Before noon I had a string of customers a quarter of a mile long waiting in front of my door to take their turns at being bitten. The way the long green came in literally staggered me. The money drawer was full, and I began to chuck it into a dry-goods box under the counter. Before night the box overflowed, and I was wading around in five-dollar bills up to my knees.

"Imagine the delicious sensation that trickled along my spinal coil as I contemplated my future career as a millionaire. I reckoned I had Rockefeller skinned to a finish. Standard Oil wasn't in it beside a rattlesnake in Bangor. Not until the agency closed did business relax a particle. Far into the night I was kept busy gathering those five-dollar bills into bundles of five thousand dollars each and preparing to ship them by truck to the nearest bank the following day.

"Next day business was better still, if possible, but I noticed that the snake was getting a little tired. I kept him at it, although he seemed inclined to balk. I figured that in about two days more the whole of Bangor would be gloriously drunk, and the man who couldn't show a snake bite would be regarded as a freak. In fact, the story had gone abroad, and people were flocking in from the suburban regions even as far away as Stockton, Corinna, and Sangersville.

"But, alas! my dream was nearly at an end. On the third day the snake died. He had been worked to death. And I had only ninety-seven thousand dollars

in the bank. When I realized that I had fallen under a hundred thousand I was heartbroken. Since then I've been searching for another snake. Every rattler I've found has had its fangs drawn, and fate seems against me. Excuse these few pearly tears."

CHAPTER XL.

A SAILOR'S YARN.

"Well, that was unfortunate, cap'n," half chuckled Chet. "And your ninety-seven thousand didn't stand by you long?"

"It trickled away, even as a brook in a scorching desert. It vanished like dew before the morning sunshine. I'm not one given to great worriment of mind over the future. Therefore, I scarcely realized how it was going until it was gone. Once more with the joyous budding springtime afar beyond the hazy horizon I found myself adrift on an unfriendly ocean, without fuel and with my whistle so dry I could not even whistle up a zephyr."

"What did you do then?"

"Oh, I am vastly fertile in brainy resources. You can slam me down so hard that you jar the earth, and I'll come up with a bound like a rubber ball. Permit me to confess that ere I distributed that ninety-seven thousand among the various breweries of Boston I became troubled with a strange hallucination. Although to my positive knowledge I had not purchased any more snakes, I sometimes awoke in the cold gray dawn and discovered whole flocks of them gamboling over the walls of my room, playing tag on my bed, and wigwagging at me from the footposts. They were a jolly, sociable lot of snakes, but they became altogether too friendly and frequent. With the expiration of that ninety-seven thousand they finally melted away, even as a rich man's friends melt away when his money is gone, and I saw them no more.

"After the snakes, I had the shakes. Standing before a full-length pier glass and gazing on my some-

what ethereal reflection, I noted the perturbed manner in which my hands were quivering. I couldn't hold them still, and the more I tried to hold them still, the more they shook. I decided to preambulate forth to a pharmacy, otherwise known as a drug store, and get something for my nerves. On my way thither I learned that the principal end man who played the bones in Billy East's Minstrels, which was to give a show in town that night, had unexpectedly departed for parts unknown, either above or below.

"Professor East was in desperate need of an end man who could shake the bones. The moment I learned this I turned my Trilbys in search of the professor. When I found him I put it up to him that I was about the cleverest boneshaker he could find in the country. He brought forth a set and asked me to show what I could do. Shake 'em? Why, mate, the way I could make those bones clatter, with the aid of my unsteady nerves, literally appalled him. He engaged me right off, and I traveled with his show for ten days. During those ten days I recovered my normal condition, and, as I recovered, my ability to shake the bones grew less and less, until finally I was doing such a bum job at it that the professor fired me.

"However, I had a new suit of clothes and my week's salary, a hundred dollars, in my pocket. It was up to little Walter to strike another job. You may not be aware of it, but I have been an industrious student of medicine. At one time I contemplated following the exalted profession of veterinary surgeon. I remembered a certain preparation used in those bygone days for the purpose of raising hair on horses which had been chaffed or afflicted with the mange. I knew the formula for the concoction of this magic hair restorer, but I had no yearning desire to again appear before the public as an ordinary horse doctor.

"In one of my moments of mental meditation and aberration I was given a solar-plexus blow by a great thought. If that stuff would raise hair on horses, why wouldn't it raise hair on human beings? The very next night I stood forth in a little buggy on the public square of a certain town. I might just as well have stood forth on the veranda of the local hotel, for that was a little buggy, too. Beneath a flaring light I warbled a few musical ditties, cracked a dozen or more ancient chestnuts, and thus gathered the gaping populace about me. Then I explained that I was Doctor Wiley, graduate of the Great Bumbum University, of Lieberfurst, Germany. I had made a life study of the afflictions of the human scalp. I guaranteed that my magic preparation, which I had on hand in small, refined, tasty-looking bottles, would raise hair faster than a whole tribe of Indians.

"The skeptical multitude seemed inclined to give me the harsh, unfeeling ha-ha. Therefore I asked any bald-headed man present to stand forth and receive treatment without money and without price. I succeeded in slopping half a dozen bottles of the stuff over as many bald heads, and closed my business for the night without gathering in as much as a plugged nickel. Nevertheless, I asked the patients I had treated to appear the following evening that I might convince the spectators of the efficacy of my great remedy.

"The next night they were all on hand, and I give you my word, on which you can rely, and on which I have re-lied many times, that those bald-headed men were no longer bald. Some of them had a growth of hair on their heads to the extent of two inches or more. Did I do any business that night? Well, say, mate, it didn't take me more than thirty minutes to close out my whole stock at ten dollars a bottle.

"I remained in that town four days, doing a tre-

mendous business every evening, and I might be there yet only for the fact that I found it necessary to flee for my life. Why, that stuff raised hair so fast on the heads of the people who used it that the barbers were worked to death, and my patients began to believe they would be ruined in paying for haircuts.

"But that wasn't the worst thing that happened. Several impatient old Joshuas with bald craniums had slopped the stuff on so profusely that a most astonishing result followed. The hair grew so fast on their heads that it fairly pulled itself out by the roots and left them balder than ever. When they returned to me for a second treatment I saw my finish, for you know you can't raise hair where the roots have been utterly and totally exterminated. There was no hope for those poor suckers, and, like the man playing checkers, it was my move.

"Following my new profession of hair regenerator, I traveled far into the interior of the country, meeting with the same success everywhere. It was out in Oshkosh that another unfortunate little thing occurred. I had learned to caution my patients not to use the regenerator too lavishly, and, therefore, few of them encountered the misfortune of having their new-growing hair yank itself out by the roots. Among my patients in Oshkosh was a ravishing lady of uncertain age and blond tresses. I wondered why she bought the restorer, but for three nights in concussion she was on hand and purchased three bottles each night. When she appeared on the fourth night she informed me that she liked the taste of it so well that she wished to secure six bottles. I asked her to put out her tongue, and, so help me Ananias, she had a growth of hair on that tongue fully an inch long. In order to keep that hair from growing still further and choking her I had to hastily mix up a retarder and feed it to

her. That was not all I did. I knew what would happen when the warm, balmy days came round again, and at my own suspense I supplied her with a full barrel of moth balls, directing her to swallow a moth ball regularly each hour to keep the moths out of her stomach.

"Out in Kalamazoo I ran across a hollow-cheeked, sad-looking individual, who informed me that he was about to pass away with liver complaint. He was a very wealthy man, and he had spent thousands upon thousands of dollars in the fruitless endeavor to find something that would brace up his pining liver. I told him I'd cure him. He looked at me with a sad and doubtful eye, and invited me to go fall off the universe.

"Instead of complying with this kind invitation, I attired to the privacy of my swell suite of apartments in the leading hotel and proceeded to knock together a remedy for that gentleman's liver. When I presented the remedy to him I was compelled to go down on my knees and entreat him to take it. He had no faith, but he had lots of hard coin, and the coin was giving me an itching palm. I wanted to handle it. I wanted to caress it. Says I, 'My friend, if you will take three doses of this medicine to-day, and it does you no good, I'll not importune you further.' In dulcet tones and with all the eloquence I could command I urged him to give it a trial. My power of persuasion finally concurred, and he agreed to comply.

"Early the following morning that man, with the returning blush of health in his cheeks and the renewed fire of youth in his hitherto sunken eyes, appeared at the door of my rooms and fell on my neck, sobbing with joy when I greeted him. He informed me that already he felt like a new man. He was so excited and overwrought that he promised me a mil-

lion in government bonds if I continued to doctor him and completed his restoration to health. He insisted that I should abandon my career as a hair restorer and give my whole time and distention to him. With that million seductively beckoning me onward, I finally agreed to comply.

"We traveled from Kalamazoo to the Pacific coast in my patient's private car. Three times a day we regaled our palates on reed birds and champagne. I smoked cigars at a dollar each as I reclined in a luxurious chair by the car window and watched the world float by outside.

"Each day my patient grew better and stronger. In fact, he was fully restored to health ere we reached Los Angeles. But on the day of our arrival a sad and unfortunate thing happened. He died—poor fellow! he died. But what followed was really frightful and most distressing to relate. After he died his liver was so strong and healthy that it kept right on doing business at the old stand, and it was necessary to extract it and kill it with a club before the poor man could be prepared for his coffin.

"And, alas! I didn't have the pleasure of caressing that million with my yearning digits. Oh, this world is full of sorrow and bitter disappointments, and surely I have had more than my share of these. Once more I'm about to turn on the sprinkler. I fear the weeping habit is becoming chronic with me."

CHAPTER XLI.

A PARTNERSHIP.

They flew through a village at thirty miles an hour.

"Look out for that horse!" cried Wiley, as a horse standing in front of a store began to back round in fright.

"Oh, blow that!" said Chet. "These old jays want to look out for their nags. They don't want to leave them standing round."

They shot past, while the horse went galloping madly down a side street.

Leaving a cloud of dust behind them, they were outside the village limits in a twinkling.

"We don't hit a strip like that very often," said Chet. "The best roads are through the villages."

"Don't you ever slack up when running through towns?" questioned the sailor.

"Nit. I put on more steam."

In a short time they came to another bad strip of road, where it was necessary to slow down.

"Forget your romances, cap'n," invited Chet, "and tell me exactly what is taking you to Fardale."

"Another colossal scheme is running riot in my massive brain," explained the marine marvel. "As I hitherto elucidated, I'm too good to play baseball on any of the big league teams, but, my boy, I must be in the game. I yearn for it even as a mother yearns for her kidnaped offspring."

"But you don't expect to play baseball in Fardale, do you?"

"Nay, nay, not I."

"Then what's the project?"

"Didst ever feast thine eyes on the Blue Hills two hundred miles to the northwest?"

"The Blue Hills?"

"Thus I spake."

"Why, yes, they're somewhere up in the vicinity of Wellsburg, aren't they?"

"About forty miles from Wellsburg as the crow navigates the atmosphere."

"I know where they are."

"There's something doing in the baseball line thereabouts during the slumbrous summer. Last year they had a couple of teams up there and aroused the natives and summer visitors to great enthusiasm. You see, there are several summer hostelries up in the Blue Hills. To these inns flock the city-weary pilgrims, who are seeking rest, recuperation, flirtation, and a high old time generally. Ah! mate, you should feast your eyes on the luscious young ladies who linger there from June until September. I have beheld them, and they caused my heart to palpitate with emotions which were fairly sweltering in their intensity. I've been ruminating on the possibility of spending a delectable summer amid the Blue Hills."

"You're getting away from baseball in your poetic flights, cap'n."

"Not so. Indeed, I am drawing toward it. Up in those hills is the cozy little summer town of Pineville. Last year Pineville had no ball team, and, as a result, many visitors were dissatisfied and unrestful. The proprietor of the Pine Tree Inn, at Pineville, has decided to put a ball team onto the field this year. There is talk of forming a league up there, and, my reputation having been wafted by the balmy breezes to said proprietor's ears, he has suggested to me that I should organize and manage the team for him."

"Oh, I see. Still, that doesn't explain why you're on your way to Fardale."

"In Fardale I shall commune heart to heart with my old side partner, Richard Merriwell. I wish to engage him and several of his mates for my summer nine. I have now made my mission clear, perchance."

"Oh, yes," laughed Chet shortly, "you've made it clear now; but I don't see what you want of Merriwell."

"Don't you?"

"Not much."

"Why, mate, he's the real thing on the pitcher's slab, if my memory is not at fault. Of course, I shall do a large part of the twirling myself, but I can't do it all. I must have an able assistant, and therefore I am on my way to consult Richard the Great."

"Richard the Nothing!" retorted Arlington. "There's nothing great about him, except his head. I acknowledge he has a bad case of swelled head."

"From your conversation I should derive the conclusion that you and Richard are not on intimate terms of friendship."

"He's no friend of mine! See here, Wiley, I confess that Merriwell has been lucky."

"Dost call it that?"

"Nothing else. As a pitcher he's fairly good, but he does have barrels of luck. If his luck ever turns on him, he won't be one, two, three in baseball. I say, cap'n, I wouldn't mind playing on a summer team this year. Why can't you and I go into partnership?"

The sailor struck his forehead with his knuckles.

"Such a thing hath not hitherto occurred to me," he answered. "As I have made clear as crystal, at present I'm traveling around on my uppers. I fancied perchance I could secure a small loan from Richard

the Great, with the understanding that I would make good this summer."

"How much do you need?"

"Let me cogitate. You know I'm a person of fine instincts and luxurious tastes. The mere possession of a paltry sum is no solace to my sensitive soul."

"Hold on," laughed Chet; "don't hit me too hard. I'm not very flush at present, but I expect to make a raise before long."

"Well, considering the depleted condition of your exchequer, I'll treat you tenderly. You might let me have the small sum of a hundred."

"A hundred?"

"Did I make it too light? Then call it two hundred."

"Your modesty is painful, cap'n. Between you and me, I haven't a hundred. I had it a short time ago, and I attempted to double it. I lost on the speculation and found myself with about eleven cents in my clothes."

"We've all been there many's the time," hummed Wiley. "The last time I got down to a dime I bought a newspaper and told the boy to keep the change. He thought me a Standard Oil magnate. There's nothing like making a bluff in this world. A dime is no good unless it has plenty of companions to keep it company. But about that hundred——"

"I think I have between forty and fifty dollars," interrupted Chet. "If we enter into this proposed partnership I'll divvy with you, and when I make a raise you can draw on me for more."

"That settles it," said the sailor promptly. "We are partners to the finish from the time you see fit to make that divvy."

"But you understand we're not going to have any dealings with Merriwell. We don't want him. There

are plenty of other good players I know—plenty I can get hold of. Leave the making up of the team to me, cap'n. If you will make arrangements with your hotel man, I'll furnish the team."

"'Tis done!" cried the marine marvel. "You'll never regret your decision, mate. We'll gallop up there among the Blue Hills and show those people the game of baseball as it should be played."

They continued to discuss this plan while Chester piloted the car over the rough country roads.

Some ten miles from Fardale the automobile began to behave badly and finally balked, coming to a full stop.

"What, ho!" cried Wiley. "We are becalmed!"

"Something's out of order," said Arlington, as he sprang out.

Languidly stretching his limbs, the sailor descended and flung himself on the grass beneath the shade of a roadside tree, while Arlington sought the cause of the trouble.

"Is the rudder in good working order?" inquired Wiley. "Perchance you ought to trim ship and take another tack."

"I think my current is short-circuited somewhere!" growled Chet, as he examined the wiring.

With his chin on his hands and his elbows on the ground, Wiley stretched himself upon his stomach and calmly watched his companion puttering over the automobile.

"Those buzz wagons are worse than bucking bronchos when they go contrary," he observed. "I hate to see you labor and perspire thus profusely, mate. It jars the sensitive nerve of my diaphragm to hear you use such explosive language. Have you no cheffoniere?"

"No, I haven't kept a chauffeur for some time."

"Chauffeur, eh? You haven't kept one? Well, I suppose that's why you have some money to *show for* your economy. Drop that wrench! Don't reach for your revolver! I won't do it again!"

After a time, as Chester continued to work over the machine, Wiley rolled on his back, pulled his cap over his eyes, and fell asleep.

It was not far from dark when Chester aroused the sailor by shaking him.

"Avant, disturber of delicious dreams!" said the marine marvel. "Hath found the cause of the stoppage?"

"Yes," answered Arlington crabbedly, "I found it after a while."

"What was it?"

"The batteries had run down."

"Alack-a-day, and we are so far from civilization! You can't have your batteries recharged here."

"I've fixed 'em up."

"You have?"

"Sure."

"How?"

"Oh, that was easy enough. I simply thrust my screw driver down into the different cells of the dry batteries and poured in a little water, which revived the current and made it strong enough to take us into Fardale, I fancy."

"Then we'll away. I see you have lighted your lamps and are prepared to slide through the gathering dusk."

Chester had indeed discovered and remedied the cause of the trouble. The machine started promptly, and there were no further delays on the road. As they were approaching Fardale a person on horseback turned into the road ahead of them from another road leading out of a strip of timber.

Arlington blew the Gabriel horn.

The sound of the horn and the glare of the lights frightened the horse, which snorted, reared, and went tearing away along the road.

For a moment horse and rider had been fairly in the glare of the ascetyline lights.

"Great Cæsar!" cried Arlington. "That's my sister, June!"

CHAPTER XLII.

AN ACCIDENT.

A second horse sped out of the timber road into the glare of the lights, whirled to the right, and followed the first.

On this animal was a boy, whose face was turned for one moment in the direction of the automobile. Then he was seen to drive the spurs deep as he raced away in pursuit of June.

"What, ho!" cried the sailor. "Methinks I recognize the only and original Richard Merriwell!"

"Blazes take him!" rasped Arlington. "He's been out riding with my sister! June's horse is running away with her!"

Chet recklessly yanked open the throttle and put on full speed.

The machine seemed to leap forward like a thing of life. It went bounding over the uneven road in a way that caused Cap'n Wiley's heart to rise into his throat.

"Avast, Cap'n Arlington!" yelled the marine marvel. "We've struck a squall! Beware or we'll find ourselves high and dry on a reef!"

Arlington's action was caused by his unreasoning anger in discovering his sister and Merriwell together. In a few moments the lights revealed Dick plainly as he urged his horse to its utmost. They also showed June some distance in advance, clinging desperately to her mount and endeavoring to pull the frightened beast down.

"You'll run them down!" shouted Wiley.

Red lights—danger signals—suddenly showed in ad-

vance. June managed to pull her frightened horse to one side and disappeared down a bank at the left of the road.

Dick Merriwell unhesitatingly followed.

With a gasp Arlington realized they were right upon a little stream which had been spanned by a bridge. He knew those red lights meant danger at the bridge. His own lights revealed the fact that the planking of the bridge was up.

It was necessary to act instantly and without the slightest hesitation. Chet yanked out the clutch and jammed on the brake and reverse.

Too late!

He could not stop, therefore he swerved to the left and went careening down the bank where June and Dick had led.

There was a crash, a terrific shock, and then——

For a moment Arlington was stunned, but a rush of water revived him, and weakly he attempted to rise.

Impossible!

The overturned machine had pinned him fast as he lay flat upon his back. The water was flowing over his head and body, threatening to drown him in a very few moments.

In a dazed way he realized this and summoned his strength in another struggle to free himself and lift his head above the surface of the shallow stream.

Fearful thoughts flitted through his reeling brain. Was this to be the end? Must he die in this wretched manner?

For a few seconds he fought like a madman, but without other assistance he was doomed, a fearful fact that was forced in upon his consciousness as he finally fell back and the pitiless water flowed above him.

Gurgling, strangling, choking, Chet caught his breath and felt a pair of hands holding his head high enough to bring his mouth and nostrils above the surface.

His eyes were filled with water, but vaguely he saw a dusky figure bending over him. Vaguely he beheld the terrible shape of his overturned machine, which seemed resting upon a part of his body. He wondered if his legs were crushed. He wondered if he had been mangled and maimed so that escape meant no more than the life of a wretched cripple for him.

His head was lifted higher.

"Arlington," called a voice; "Arlington, are you killed?"

He tried to answer, but only mumbling, choking, gasping sounds came from his lips.

Evidently those sounds afforded his would-be rescuer some relief, for an exclamation of thankfulness came from the rescuer's lips.

"Where's the other fellow?" this person cried. "If I could have a little help!"

But he was left to face the frightful task alone. The life of Chester Arlington was in his hands, and through his efforts alone could it be preserved.

Chester knew at last whose hands had lifted him and held him thus.

They were the hands of his hated enemy, Richard Merriwell.

Dick did not falter. Kneeling on one knee in the shallow water, he braced Arlington in that cramped position across his other hip while he reached down and sought with all his strength to pull a portion of Chester's clothing from beneath the wrecked car.

"Your coat—it holds you down!" came from Dick's lips. "Do you think the machine is on your legs?"

"I—I can't—tell," answered Chester faintly.

"Do you feel any pain?"

"No. I'm numb all—over."

"The car is bottom up. I believe you're lying crosswise in front of the forward seats. If so, your legs may be uninjured. My knife—I'll cut away your coat."

Still supporting Chester, Merriwell felt in his pocket, found his knife, brought it forth and opened it. Then he reached down into the water, working in the darkness and by touch, as he slowly slashed at the portion of Arlington's coat that seemed bound beneath the machine.

"If you—get me out," faltered Chester, "I won't —forget it!"

"If I can't do it alone," promised Merriwell grimly, "I'll stay by you until help comes, if it's all night."

It was slow work cutting away the portion of the garment that held Chester down, but finally Merriwell managed to cut it and tear it until he had accomplished the task. Then, with his arms locked under Chet's, he surged backward with all his strength and dragged the unlucky boy from beneath the machine. Supporting Arlington with an arm about his waist, Dick almost carried him to the bank.

There was the sound of a horse's hoofs and a voice calling through the darkness:

"Chester! Chester! Where are you? What has happened?"

"It's June," whispered Chet, as Dick deposited him on the bank. "Answer her, please."

"Here we are, June," called Merriwell. "He's all right. I don't believe he's seriously hurt."

The horse splashed through the stream and stopped close at hand. In a twinkling June was out of the saddle, kneeling beside her brother. The freed animal

whirled with a snort, recrossed the stream, and reached the highway, along which the sound of its hoofs grew fainter and fainter in the direction of Fardale.

June had her arms about her brother's neck.

"Chester—oh, Chester!" was all she could say.

"Don't smother me!" he gasped. "Give me a little air, sis. Great Vesuvius! I thought I was a goner."

"How badly are you hurt?"

He felt himself anxiously with his hands and then moved first one leg and then the other. As he attempted to move his left leg an exclamation of pain escaped his lips.

"Broken leg, I guess," he said. "Hang the infernal luck! What in blazes do people mean by tearing up a bridge and leaving it open at night? Somebody'll pay for this, and pay dearly, too!"

"Instead of talking that way, you should be grateful that you're alive," said June.

"Where's your companion?" questioned Dick. "I thought I saw some one in the car with you."

"It was Cap'n Wiley. I suppose he's under the car now. I fancy that's the end of him."

"Great Scott!" cried Dick. "I must investigate—I must see what's become of him!"

But even as Merriwell turned to rush back into the stream he caught a glimpse of a queer-looking figure not over ten feet away. Leaping toward it, he found Cap'n Wiley, drenched to the skin, sitting there on the ground and whispering softly to himself.

"Wiley!" exclaimed Merriwell. "How did you get here? How did you escape?"

"Hush!" came from the sailor's lips. "That was the grandest Fourth of July pyrotechnic display I ever witnessed. The air was literally full of skyrockets, fire balloons, comets, shooting stars, and other beau-

teous and awesome illuminants too numerous to commemorate. The aurora borealis got in some fine work, also. Talk about your earthquakes! Why, that little jar at Frisco isn't worth mentioning in the same breath. Old Vesuvius will have to take a back seat after this."

Dick was greatly relieved.

"If you can talk like that, I don't believe you re dying," he said.

"Dying?" murmured the marine marvel. "I'm dead! No human being could pass through such tribulation and continue to preambulate peacefully that terrestrial sphere known as the earth. I have frequently meditated timorously as to my fate after my demise. I've often speculated as to whether I would play a harp or shovel coal. Although I've heard some awesome music during the last few faltering minutes, I now realize my destination. I'm sitting on the bank of the River Styx and waiting for old Charon. I can hear the doleful murmur of the dark river as it flows at my feet. I see no lights on yonder shore. I may as well get off my coat and prepare to shovel."

It was a relaxing of the tension on his nerves that caused Merriwell to laugh. That laugh came in spite of himself and before he realized it. Joyously he slapped Wiley on the shoulder.

"They can't kill you, Walter!" he said. "This is not the first time you've wrestled with the grim conqueror and come forth a winner. You're all right, my boy!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

LAID UP.

Bolstered up in bed at the Fardale House, Chester looked at the doctor inquiringly.

"Well, doc," he asked, "how is the old leg?"

"You're lucky, young man," said the physician. "There are no broken bones. Your ankle is wrenched and your hip bruised, that's all."

"How long will that keep me anchored here?"

"Not long. If you're careful with it, you ought to be able to hobble around within a few days."

"Isn't that splendid, Chester!" exclaimed June, who had anxiously awaited the physician's decision.

"Splendid?" snapped the injured boy. "Thunder and lightning, I don't call it splendid!"

"I should say you were fortunate not to be instantly killed," said the doctor.

"It's queer to me how people call misfortunes fortunate!" growled Arlington. "The whole thing was a rotten piece of hard luck, although the town is to blame, and it'll have to pay the damages. I'll bring suit against this miserable old burgh. I haven't any love for it, anyhow, and this is my chance to soak it good and hard."

"Weren't there warning lights at the bridge?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, they had some lights up, but I couldn't stop."

"Couldn't?"

"I should say not."

"Why not?"

"I was going too fast."

"Oh, you were. How fast do you think you were traveling?"

"Oh, just about as fast as I could hit her up."

"How fast will your machine go?"

"Fifty miles an hour."

"You don't think you were making that speed, do you?"

"Oh, no. You see I'd only been letting her out for a short distance."

"You were within the boundary lines of Fardale, and it seems to me from your own confession that you were exceeding the speed limit. If you had been running slowly and with due caution, you would have seen those lights in time to stop. I don't believe you'll have much of a case against the town, young man."

Regardless of his sister, Chet muttered an oath, realizing he had made a blunder by his reckless statements to the doctor.

"Well, we'll see about it—we'll see about it!" he snapped. "I suppose my machine is ruined. Say, sis, I want you to get somebody to gather up a crew of men to move that car and bring it into town. If she's any good now, I may have her fixed up."

"Some of the authorities have already gone out to inspect the condition of your car," said the physician. "I fancy they thought you might contemplate bringing suit, and they decided to investigate the affair immediately."

"Oh, these Reubens are up to snuff, aren't they!" sneered the injured lad.

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Chester," remonstrated June. "It doesn't seem grateful."

"Grateful?" he almost cried. "Why should I be grateful to anybody?"

"I understand you practically owe your life to young Merriwell," came from the physician.

Chester ground his strong white teeth together.

"I'd like to know what he did!" burst resentfully from his lips.

"Why, didn't he pull you from beneath the car?" asked June.

"So he's been boasting about it, has he? He's been telling you all about his noble and heroic action, has he? That's like him."

"He told me when I questioned him. He said you were pinned down by the car, which had caught your coat and was holding you so you could not get your head above the water."

"He's to blame for it," declared Chet.

"I don't see how you can say that. How was he to blame?"

"Why, if he had not been out riding with you, this would not have happened. You wouldn't ride around the country alone after nightfall. I'd like to have you explain that, June."

"We started quite late and got off the main roads. It took us longer than we expected to get back."

"Oh, yes, oh, yes, I suppose so! That's a fine explanation!"

"It's true."

"You never have anything to do with that fellow, June, that something like this doesn't happen. He's been a hoodoo to me from the day I first met him. What are you going to do now, doc?"

"I'm going to bandage that ankle," answered the doctor, who was preparing for the work.

Chester continued to snarl and growl, but finally he turned to his sister and said:

"I wish mother was here."

"I tried to get her by phone after we reached the hotel," explained the girl.

"Tried to? Couldn't you?"

"No. They informed me she had left this morning, without giving her destination."

"Oh, well, I can get along, I reckon."

"I'll look out for you, Chester—I'll nurse you."

There was a knock on the door.

When June answered the knock she found Cap'n Wiley, in a baggy, ill-fitting suit of clothes, standing outside.

"Gaze not on my attire," implored the sailor. "My former raiment was somewhat juicy, and I had to accept these garments from an accommodating gentleman of massive mold. They fit me about thirty minutes too late. My agitated diaphragm is yearning for information concerning the condition of your noble brother."

"Come in, Wiley," called Chet.

The sailor teetered into the room on the balls of his feet.

"Ah-ha! my extinguished side partner—I mean my distinguished side partner. I am glad to see you resting in peace and not in pieces. I have come to soothe your fevered brow as you recline on this downy bed."

"That's kind of you," said Arlington; "but I don't think I'll need your ministrations. I have a fevered ankle, instead of a fevered brow, and the doc's getting ready to care for that."

"I've been a little feverish myself since I could collect my thoughts and meditate on the terrible calamity so narrowly averted. Every time I think about it I feel hot flushes run over me. The only time I enjoy a flush is in a little game of poker. When I fully realized how near we were to the Golden Shore I almost imagined myself again in the heart of the Yuma Desert. You may know it's pretty warm there. I was with the first company to build a railroad track

across the desert, and one day it got so hot that the rails melted and ran all over the country."

The doctor laughed.

"That was pretty warm," he said, as he turned back the bedclothes and prepared to bandage Chet's ankle.

"Warm?" cried the marine marvel. "The word doesn't express it. While I was there I had a side partner by the name of Johnny McGuire. Johnny was a strong, rugged individual, but he pined and passed away. I felt bad for him as we deposited his deserted earthly tabernacle beneath the burning Yuma sands. He had died unrepentant and in the midst of his sins. Therefore, we all realized whither he had gone. That night after the funeral a few kindred spirits gathered to mourn for Johnny. In our midst was a spiritualist, who proposed that we should seek to enter into communication with him. We formed a circle, and the spiritualistic gentleman went into a trance, during which he soon got a line on Johnny. Says he: 'Boys, poor John is down yonder. He wants us to send him his blanket. He's freezing to death there.' This, my friends, will give you a faint idea of the heat we experienced while promulgating that old railroad across the Yuma Desert."

"I'm afraid this accident has affected your mind," laughed the doctor. "I'm afraid you're given to exaggeration."

"Not in the least, not in the least," promptly denied the sailor. "I've been through many a hair-raising catastrophe before. These little incidents do not even flutter my iron nerves. The only time I have ever worried about any little misfortune was in Jersey City in the summer of eighty-nine. On that doleful summer I found myself up against one of my hard-luck streaks and was compelled, in order to provide sustenance for my earthly being, to do real manual labor. If there's

anything I abhor it's manual labor. We were moving a huge iron tank late one afternoon when a great misfortune happened. The specially constructed truck for moving the tank broke. The tank slipped off and fell to the ground in a most peculiar position. It struck on one end and stood upright. As it started to fall I attempted to get out of the way, but, as fate would have it, I was not quick enough, and, therefore, I found myself, practically unscathed, a prisoner in that tank. I had my tools with me, but what could I do? There I was with that massive thing of iron and steel holding me a captive.

"A short time after the tank fell I heard my fellow laborers at work on the outside. They were endeavoring to drill through in order that I might not be smothered to death. It was a gigantic task, and not until long after darkness had fallen on Jersey City did they make one or two tiny holes to admit air. Then, exhausted by their efforts, they left me, intending to return on the following morning and liberate me.

"Shortly after my comrades of toil departed I heard other sounds which greatly aroused my curiosity. It seemed that many persons were boring away on that tank. At times they pecked and hammered at it as a woodpecker hammers at the bole of a tree. Lighting match after match, I finally discovered what was happening. The far-famed Jersey mosquitoes had located me and were drilling through the tank to get at me. I presume there were hundreds of them employed at this task. It was not long before their bills began to come through, and I realized that a horrible fate stared me in the eye. In a last desperate endeavor to save myself I seized my hammer and began to clinch their bills as fast as they came through the tank. If ever I worked desperately for life, I did

that night. Gallons of perspiration poured off my person and soaked the ground beneath my feet. All through the night those persistent mosquitoes kept at it, poking their bills through the tank, and as fast as a bill appeared I clinched it.

"When morning came a big gang of laborers approached the tank for the purpose of again attempting my liberation. As they drew near they frightened the mosquitoes, who immediately set up a great flapping of wings, and, so help me Bob, away they went, tank and all into the air. That tank has never been recovered."

"Well, the loss of one tank preserved another one," laughed Arlington. "Wiley, you've made me feel better."

CHAPTER XLIV.

A MOTHER'S VISIT.

Late the following day Mrs. Arlington arrived in Fardale. She found June faithfully attending Chester, who was sitting on a big easy-chair, with his foot resting on a bolster of cushions.

"My dear, dear boy!" cried the woman, rushing forward and flinging her arms about his neck.

"Careful, mom—careful!" he warned. "You came near hitting my game ankle a rap."

She kissed him repeatedly.

"A horrible thing to happen!" she breathed. "They say you escaped death by a miracle."

"Oh, I don't know. I don't believe I was born to croak that way. Don't muss my hair. Back up and let me get a look at you."

Still ignoring June, she stood before him, with her gloved hands clasped.

"By Jove! you're looking better, mother," he said. "You're looking younger."

"Do you think so?" she asked, with a thrill of pleasure. "Do you really mean it, Chester?"

"Of course I mean it. Never saw you looking so fine in all my life."

"Well, I'm really feeling much improved. You see I've ceased to worry about things. I used to worry a great deal."

"You haven't noticed June, mother."

"June? Why, June is here, isn't she!"

She gave her daughter a spineless hand and barely brushed June's forehead with her lips.

"It's true, mother!" cried the girl, impulsively embracing her. "You're looking better than I've seen

you before in a long, long time. I'm sure your health must be greatly improved."

"Outside a slight nervous trouble I've always been in good health," declared Esther Arlington. "Don't be so boisterous, June. Associating with girls in a small boarding school like this at Fardale is not conducive to proper manners, I see. The most of your associates at school must be plain country girls whose parents have little or no position in the world. Such girls may be expected to romp and play the hoiden, but you should not acquire their manners, my daughter."

As usual, the woman had thrown a dash of icy water on June's impulsive, affectionate spirit. Still, the girl tried bravely not to show that she was hurt.

"Oh, some of the girls are very nice indeed, mother," she declared. "They've all been very good to me."

"Why, you speak as if you were grateful to them for being good to you. Why shouldn't they be good to you? You're superior to them in every way—at least, you should be. You come of better blood. Good to you! Why, they should think it an honor to have you for a schoolmate. No doubt some of the poor creatures will seek to force themselves upon you socially in after life. It will be very unpleasant for you if you're forced to snub them."

"Oh, I could never do that!"

"Couldn't you? Do you mean to say that you would accept some poor farmer's daughter as a social equal simply because you happened to attend the same school with her? I'm sorry to say, June, that you've always seemed to have a plebeian streak in your make-up. I can't understand it."

Have you forgotten, Mrs. Arlington, that you yourself were a person of humble birth? Have you forgotten that you were only a farmer's daughter? In

your moments of meditation you seldom recall the fact that the early years of your life were spent on a farm. It is true that during those years, ere you married young Dave Arlington, afterward known as D. Roscoe Arlington, 'the railroad magnate,' your heart rebelled against the fate that had cast you amid such humble surroundings. Even as a girl you were ambitious to rise to a more exalted station. You disdained and despised your girl acquaintances. You envied the fine ladies who had horses, carriages, and jewels, and it was your dream that some day you would possess such things yourself.

Your marriage with young Dave Arlington was said to be a love match, but had he not been the most prosperous young man among all your acquaintances, with bright prospects ahead of him, would you have yielded to his pleading? Beyond question during those early years of your married life you were like a spur to drive him on, ever urging him to his utmost in his remarkable struggle to rise in the world. The time came when you had more of this world's luxuries than you had ever dreamed of possessing. Still, they did not bring you peace and contentment. Still, you longed for more power, and to the end you continued to be the spur that drove your husband to strive constantly day after day, month after month, year after year, for more wealth.

The strain was too much for him, and finally his nerves faltered and relaxed. A score of enemies had been waiting for that moment, and they grasped the opportunity to strike at him. He went down before their combined assault, and at last the former money king, a man of many millions, was not a power to be respected and feared in the financial world. The spur that drove him to the heights also forced him headlong into the chasm.

June was flushed and embarrassed.

"I have found, mother, that some of the poorest girls at school are the most ladylike and kind-hearted."

"Kind-hearted perhaps, but not ladylike. They may seem ladylike, but it is mere imitation of their betters. In order to be genuine a lady must be born and bred a lady. But I'm forgetting you, Chester. Tell me how this frightful accident happened."

"Oh, these country yokels had a bridge torn up, and I came upon it at full speed. The stream was a shallow one, and teams had been driving through it while they were working on the bridge. It was dark, you know, and I did not see the red lights in time to stop the machine. I had to turn out, and that's about all I know, for next I found myself in the water with the car pinning me down. It had turned completely over."

"How dreadful! how dreadful!" breathed Mrs. Arlington.

"June was mainly responsible for the accident."

"June?"

"Yes."

"Was she with you?"

"Oh, no. I had a chap with me whom I had picked up on the road. He escaped without a scratch. You see June was out horseback riding, in company with a certain young fellow, and her horse took fright at my lights. The beast started to run away with her, and I attempted to follow. I was watching her and the chap with her, and therefore I failed to observe the condition of the bridge."

"Exasperating—perfectly exasperating! June you're always causing trouble of some sort!"

"It seems so," admitted the girl.

"Who was with you?"

"Oh, you ought to know, mom!" sneered Chet.

"It was Dick Merriwell," said the girl quietly. "We had lost our way on the roads, and that's how we happened to be returning to the village so late. It had just grown dark. I presume the sound made by the galloping of my horse kept me from hearing the automobile. I came into the main road directly in front of it, and my horse took the bit and ran with me."

Mrs. Arlington found a chair and sat down, as if quite overcome.

"That Merriwell boy will be the death of some one of us yet!" she exclaimed.

"He saved Chester after the accident," June hastend to explain. "Only for him Chester would have been drowned. He heard the crash and turned back in time to drag Chet from beneath the machine."

"A little thing to do after causing such a calamity."

"Evidently June seems to think it was a great act of heroism on his part," laughed Arlington. "Any fellow would have done the same."

"That boy is your bête noire, Chester," declared Mrs. Arlington. "I shall be relieved when the time comes that you no longer have any dealings whatever with him. I was sorry you chose to enter the school at Fairport and remain in this vicinity. Still, I would not insist on taking you away."

"I'll get away now, mother," nodded the youth. "I'm done at Fairport."

"Done?"

"Yes."

"Why, the term is not over."

"But I've left."

"You have?"

"Sure thing. I quit that old school yesterday. That's how I happened to be on my way here."

"You quit—in what manner?"

"Well, I suppose you'll receive the report that I

was expelled. That old chump, Glidden, attempted to suspend me."

"For what reason?"

"Oh, because I took a few days off last week. He called me up before all the fellows and gave me a dressing down. Then he notified me that I was suspended. I wouldn't stand for it, and I told him a few things right off the reel. It did me good to throw it into him. He got hot and expelled me. I suppose the report has gone to the gov'nor."

"Your father will be very much displeased."

"Not a doubt of it. The old boy didn't like it much when I was fired from Fardale. But you'll fix it all right, mom. I depend on you. You can smooth it over with the gov'nor. I'm not worrying about it, for I wanted to shake the dust of Fairport off my garments. I've had quite enough of that little one-horse burgh. There's a better school at Wellsburg, and I'd like to go there. Wellsburg is near enough to Bloomfield so that I can run down whenever I like after our new cottage is built and you're settled there."

"It's a very good idea," said Mrs. Arlington. "June, please take my wraps and hat. We'll talk this matter over, Chester."

CHAPTER XLV.

DICK IS CHALLENGED.

Once a year the Business Men's Club, of Fardale, gave an evening for the Fardale Academy ball players and their friends. On this evening the boys were given every privilege in the clubrooms. They gathered there and enjoyed themselves in a quiet, jolly way.

Among the club members Dick Merriwell was a favorite. He had hosts of friends in Fardale, and more than once he had been told he was always welcome at the clubrooms.

Dick was playing a game of rotation pool with big Bob Singleton when Chester Arlington came limping in, leaning on a cane. Arlington was followed by Cap'n Wiley and a tall, slim, raw-looking youth.

"Ahoy there, Richard, old tar!" cried the marine marvel. "Let me get a clutch at your mud hook."

He seized Dick's hand and shook it furiously.

"Well, well!" laughed Dick. "Where do you hail from, cap'n?"

"I hail from all over," was the answer. "Any old place that I hang up my hat is home sweet home to me. I'm a light-hearted wanderer on the face of Teddy Firma."

The other boys gathered around Wiley and shook hands with him.

"You're looking fuf-fuf-fuf-fine," stuttered Jolliby.

"Take care! Don't murmur that word fine in my hearing," remonstrated the sailor. "I've been fined in nineteen States and nine Territories. There are a few of my creditors who would like to find me now. By the way, Chippie, you have not retired to the farm,

I see. Last time I gazed on your beaming countenance you were contemplating taking up farming. I imagine you must be a great farmer. For instance, Chip, if you were to plant a bottle of whisky on a farm, what would come up?"

"I gug-gug-gug-guess you would," answered Jolliby promptly.

"Hear the multitude chortle with glee at the bright boy's answer," said the sailor, as there was a burst of laughter.

"Have you been coasting the briny deep of late, cap'n?" inquired Dick.

"Nay, nay, Richard. No more of that for mine. With the opening of the merry springtime and the bursting of the tender buds I found myself at St. Louis. Now, St. Louis is a village in which it is a serious thing to be stranded. I yearned to get away, but I could find no coin in my raiment. One balmy morning I wandered down to the docks and stood gazing mournfully on the rippling tide. The tide was going right by St. Louis, but I seemed to be tied there. While I lingered about the docks I ran across the skipper of a river boat who needed another man to fill out his crew. It took me about thirteen seconds to volunteer. Ere midday I found myself afloat on the good craft *Susan Jane*. I was bound for New Orleans. I calculated it would be an easy matter on reaching New Orleans to obtain passage on some steamer bound for New York.

"Did it ever occur to any of you that the Mississippi below St. Louis is rather turgid and muddy? If you dip up a bucket of Mississippi water at that point, you'll get more land than water. The river was muddier than ever before during its record. I give you my word that the water seemed thick as ordinary molasses, and it was a wonder to me that it could

flow at all. About that time the hot spell struck us. You know we had a sizzler this spring. The sun was so warm that it raised blisters a foot square on the deck of the *Susan Jane*. Beneath that scorching sun the river grew drier and drier. On my word, it was the driest water I ever sailed on. The second day out, as we bowled along southward, I observed that we were raising a cloud of dust behind us. I became worried, but the cap'n didn't seem to be disturbed in the slightest sense. When we reached Cairo the influx of the Ohio moistened things up somewhat, and we slipped along more easily; but even the Ohio couldn't wet down the Mississip' sufficiently to keep it properly moistened, and before we got to Memphis the water was so dry that it began to crack open in places. The dust we kicked up became a smothering cloud, which enveloped us and obscured the sky. When we got down to Vicksburg we felt that we would have to hang up and wait for rain. The cap'n, however, was a resourceful man, and he called on the fire department to wet down the river. It was a grand and awe-inspiring spectacle to see the whole Vicksburg fire department out squirting on the river in order to moisten it up. They finally succeeded in dampening things enough for us to proceed, but I give you my word that when we pulled into New Orleans we had worn eleven holes in the bottom of the *Susan Jane* from the friction as we cruised along the dusty bed of the old Mississip'."

"That's a pretty dry yarn, cap'n," laughed Dick.

"Yes, indeed," nodded the sailor. "Between you and me, I got so much dust into my throat during that trip that I haven't been able to wash it out since. Has any one present got anything on his hip?"

Wiley seemed vastly disappointed when he looked around and found no one producing a flask.

"Oh, well," he murmured, "I'll have to drink water and take the chances of rusting my boiler. By the way, mates, have any of you seen the newspaper accounts of my great discovery of the adamant bug?"

"The adamant bug?" chuckled Singleton. "What's that?"

"Hush! Breathe it not to the listening winds! It's the grandest discovery of the present age. I ran across this industrious little bug out in the Green River country, Kentucky. The moment I investigated and discovered the possibilities in connection with the insect I set about gathering vast herds of them into colonies. This required some time, but I finally accomplished my purpose.

"Having gathered four or five herds of these bugs, I proceeded to let them out to the farmers, who employed them on stony fields, where the bugs chewed up the stones and permitted the fine particles to be turned back into good rich soil. A second herd of bugs was engaged in masticating the rocks along a particularly stony strip of highway, and in a few weeks' time they had one of the finest roads ever seen in old Kentuck'. A third herd of bugs is now working in a sandpaper factory at Lexington. The proprietor of the sandpaper mill is paying me a regular salary for the use of these bugs. In a recent letter from him, however, he says he is thinking of shutting down his mill in order to let the road overseers have the bugs for work on a new strip of road."

"Well, that will about do for you this evening," laughed Dick. "You know there's a limit, cap'n."

"If it isn't too high, I'll get into the game," said the marine marvel promptly.

Dick and Bob resumed the game of pool, neither of them paying any attention to Arlington and the stranger, who stood near, talking in low tones.

Finally as Dick missed a shot, Chester broke into a laugh.

"You seem to be a little shy on pool, Merriwell," he observed. "You don't play it as well as you do some other things. I don't understand why you play that particular game, anyhow. It's not real pool. Why don't you play name shot?"

Dick deigned no answer.

"If I wasn't lame I'd challenge you myself," Chet went on. "My friend, Lyman, here plays a little, and I think he can trim you handsomely."

Singleton frowned.

"This is an open game," he said. "If your friend wishes to get in, he can do so."

"Oh, that's a kid's game," retorted Chet. "Make it a game worth playing, and he'll take a cue. I'd like to put him up against Merriwell for a straight fifty-point game."

"Better not play him, mate," whispered Wiley. "He'll trim you if you do."

This was enough to arouse Dick, who promptly said:

"If Mr. Lyman wishes to play fifty points, I'll see what I can do with him."

CHAPTER XLVI.

FIFTEEN BALLS!

"Good!" cried Chester. "Lyman, shake hands with Merriwell."

The stranger looked bored as he gave Dick a flabby hand.

"Deuce take you, Arlington!" he half yawned. "You're always getting me into trouble! I'm in devilish poor form, you know."

"No excuses, old fel'," laughed Chet. "I fancy you're in shape to trim this young bantam. It will be a great honor to take a fall out of him."

"Something you've never been able to do!" growled Singleton.

"Now don't throw that at me," remonstrated Chet, with a frown. "You must acknowledge that I've tried hard enough, and it hasn't always been my fault that I've failed."

"Why not your fault?" demanded Bob.

"Oh, on the gridiron and the diamond one man cannot play the whole game. I've had a lot of slobs behind me, as a rule."

"You're always inclined to blame your weaknesses onto others," said the big Fardale lad.

"I didn't show up very weak on the slab in our little game this year, did I?" demanded Chet warmly. "Didn't I hold you heavy hitters down handsomely until the dubs behind me went up in the air and let little love pats roll through them for hits?"

"You started off well," confessed Bob. "But," he added, "you finished in your usual manner—mighty rotten."

Chet flushed and shrugged his shoulders.

"That's right—lay it onto me!" he snapped. "Why, if I'd had Merriwell's team behind me—if our positions had been reversed, and he had played with Fairport, with me pitching for Fardale—I'd scored a shutout."

"Isn't it a lovely thing when one discovers a chap so modest and unassuming!" softly murmured Ted Smart. "Oh, Arlington, you make me blush for shame at my brazen conceit every time you open your mouth!"

"Back up!" said Chet, motioning him away. "Little fleas like you don't count."

"I've observed that," nodded Smart. "I've observed that it didn't make any difference to you when I robbed you of that clean hit in the fourth inning! You were tickled to death when I went into the air and forked the ball! You sat down on the bench and laughed until your sides were sore! You never swore once! Your language was elegant and refined!"

With difficulty Arlington repressed his intense annoyance over Smart's words. No one could irritate him quite as much as Ted.

"Let's not waste time chinning over things that are passed," he said. "Let's prepare to watch my friend Lyman put it over your great hero, Merriwell."

Brad Buckhart had said nothing up to this point, but now the Texan ventured to express an opinion.

"Permit me to observe some that your friend Lyman may not have such a clean cinch."

"Think so?" questioned Arlington, whirling sharply on the Westerner. "Money talks."

He produced a wad of bills, which he thrust into Brad's face.

"Hold on! hold on!" protested several of the boys.

"Betting isn't allowed here. It's against the rules of the club."

"A fact well known to Mr. Arlington," said Dick.

Chet sneered.

"You're glad enough to take refuge behind such rules," he said.

"We're guests here, and it would be an insult to the club if we broke its rules."

"Well, those rules will save money for you fellows," laughed Arlington.

A boy racked the balls and placed them in position on the table.

Arlington flipped a coin, and Lyman secured the choice.

"Go ahead, Mr. Merriwell," he said. "Start it off while I find a cue."

"Wait a moment," urged Chester, as he produced a bunch of keys. "I have access to Charlie Hinkey's private rack. He has four cues, and one of them should suit you."

He unlocked the rack, and Lyman examined the cues one after another, finally selecting one of them and chalking it.

In the meantime, Dick had chalked his cue and prepared for the break.

"Two balls to the cushion?" he asked.

"Certainly," nodded Lyman.

Merriwell broke gracefully, sending the two balls on the lower corners to the cushion, one going to the foot cushion and rolling gently behind the mass, while the other went to the side cushion and softly returned to its place at the right-hand point of the triangle.

"Rather clever break, Merriwell," complimented Lyman, as the cue ball came up the table and finally stopped within six inches of the head cushion.

Behind Dick's back Buckhart caught Arlington's

eye and made a motion with his head. Chet nodded and followed the Texan out of the clubrooms.

Lyman took his time as he inspected the positions of the balls.

"You cuc-cuc-cuc-can't dig a cuc-cuc-cuc-combination out of that, mister," asserted Chip Jolliby.

While Lyman was slowly looking the balls over Buckhart returned and whispered a word to Singleton and Bradley.

Bob nodded, and Bill said:

"Hi'm in hit, by Jove! Hi'll take a go at 'im myself, don't you know."

Then Singleton and Bradley wandered out.

After a time Lyman returned to the cue ball and announced his intention of playing for number nine, which he proposed to put into the left-hand corner pocket. There was a great deal of suppressed excitement among the boys as they watched the languid stranger, and, without exception, they believed he could not accomplish the shot.

Getting into position, Lyman drove hard against the second ball from the apex of the triangle, and number nine rolled out from the broken mass, kissed gently against another ball, and dropped into the pocket named. Not only that, but number two followed and fell into the same pocket.

"I knew he'd do it!" fibbed Smart. "It was dead easy!"

Then he slumped down on a chair and asked Hal Darrell to fan him, huskily whispering:

"I think my heart has gone on a strike!"

Lyman now had the balls scattered, and with the same deliberate languidness he proceeded to pick them off, one after another. In every case he played for position, and, making a shot, lodged the cue ball in place to follow the shot up with another.

"Three," counted Earl Gardner.

"Four," piped Obediah Tubbs.

"Fuf-fuf-fuf-five," chimed in Jolliby, as the fifth ball dropped.

"This man doesn't know a thing about playing pool!" announced Ted Smart, rising to his feet with a pretended expression of happiness on his face. "Any one can see that he is a greenhorn! He won't run more than fifteen or twenty straight!"

"Six," came from Barron Black, as another ball dropped.

Billy Bradley and Chester Arlington reëntered the clubrooms together.

"'Ow is she going?" inquired Bradley.

"There's a heavy sou'easter on," answered Cap'n Wiley.

Obediah Tubbs explained the situation to Bradley.

"'E can't keep it hup," asserted the cockney youth.

"Dern his picter! I'm afraid he ken!" whispered the fat boy. "He acts jest like a rip-snorter to me."

"Wait until Dick gets hat 'im!"

"By Jim, I'm afraid he'll have such a lead that Dick won't be able to ketch up."

"Not hon your life!" returned Bradley promptly, with a bit of American slang. "Hi'm betting my money on Dick."

"What did you go out for?" whispered Obey.

"To make a little investment," answered the English boy, with a grin.

Lyman had paused to chalk his cue. Having done this and knocked the loose chalk off with a gentle tap, he resumed play.

"Seven," "eight," "nine," "ten," counted the boys, as the stranger continued to drop the balls into the various pockets.

"Now 'e's hup against hit!" muttered Bradley, as

the cue ball lodged in a bad position and nothing but a difficult combination bank shot was left for the player.

Lyman calmly surveyed the combination, called the bank for twice the length of the table and then smashed into it.

The ball named shot off the head cushion, rebounded from the foot, and dropped into the pocket selected.

Dick Merriwell led the applause.

"That was beautiful work," he declared.

Lyman was cool as an iceberg. His success seemed neither to elate him nor to disturb his steady nerve. He was now in place to continue his work, and in a few moments only one of the fifteen balls was left on the table. The player promptly banked this for the side pocket, and the table was cleared.

CHAPTER XLVII.

EXPOSED.

"That was going some!" laughed Arlington. "And he hasn't finished yet!"

With a frown on his face, Cap'n Wiley teetered up to Chet, hooked a finger into a buttonhole of Arlington's coat, and drew him aside. The sailor was seen talking earnestly to Chester, who laughed and shook his head.

"It's criminal—criminal!" Wiley was heard to say.

In a whisper Arlington retorted:

"Shut up! It's a snap! I've caught them handsomely!"

"To my understanding it seems that you have caught them very unhandsomely," returned the marine marvel. "Fair play is ever my motto against an honest and conscientious opponent. You should state the truth. If it hurts you to do so, I'll save you the trouble."

"If you open your mouth, I'll soak you!" threatened Chet, with a flash of anger. "Don't be a fool, cap'n!"

"I like not your demeanor nor your language."

"Don't forget that you and I are partners."

"But not partners in chicanery and crime," asserted Walter, thumping his chest and staggering a bit. "My honor is untarnished. Even in the face of cruel fate and hard luck I have maintained an immaculate reputation. I entered these doors in fraternal friendship with you and your friend, the sharp. If you do not open your countenance and proclaim the truth, I shall be forced to unseal my ruby lips."

"If you say a word, you'll get it!" again threatened Chet. "Wait till the thing is over. Wait till I get the money those three chumps have put up. Then we'll give Merriwell and his sycophant friends the laugh."

"Sycophant friends is luscious language," said the captain. "If you continue to preambulate through the merry summer months in company with me, you'll be a past master of polite English. Nevertheless, also and likewise, Chesty, I am compelled to do my duty."

Without another word to Arlington, the sailor turned and stepped toward the table.

"Mate Merriwell," he said, "I have learned to my inexpressible grief that three of your boon and bosom companions have been lured from these rooms by my comrade, Arlington, who has remorselessly and maliciously induced them to bet money on the result of this thrilling contest. They couldn't bet here, but there was nothing to prevent them from going outside and betting. Unwitting and unwarned of the truth, they have posted their bottom dollar on you, their compatriot and champion. Had I realized it in time, I would have checked and chided them. Such devotion on their part, such confidence, such faith is touching in the extremest extremity."

"That'll do for you, Wiley!" cried Arlington, limping forward and flourishing his cane. "Back up and shut up!"

"Don't do that, Chesty!" murmured the marine marvel, with a gentle wag of his hand. "Don't wave your wand about my ears. You couldn't stop me with a Gatling gun. Dost think a tiny walking stick has terrors for me? Dost think anything on earth can disturb my iron nerve since I passed through the Frisco earthquake? Avast, Mate Arlington! Why, the records of that terrible calamity proclaimed untold deeds of heroism committed by me. Still, not all

my marvelous feats have been properly recorded. In the midst of that scene of horror, as I stood amid a multitude on choked and seething Market Street, I beheld one of Frisco's skyscrapers rocking like a reed in a gale. I realized that, unless something was done, in another moment the huge building would topple into the street and crush hundreds of human beings. My ready wit averted that frightful catastrophe. I seized the nearest telegraph pole, yanked it up by the roots, propped it against the building, and held it there until every person could escape to a place of safety."

"That's a pretty good story," laughed Dick; "but, if I remember correctly, the telegraph wires are under ground in Frisco."

"Even so, even so," admitted Wiley, at once. "They have planted all the wires, but I ripped up the paving with my bare hands, seized the top of one of those buried poles, and pulled it out of the ground. I confess it was a terrible struggle for me. I acknowledge that to me it seemed as if that pole extended all the way through to China. Nevertheless, I yanked it forth and braced it against the wobbling building in time, as I have voraciously narrated."

"You're delaying the game with your fairy story, cap'n," said Chet. "Get away from the table."

"Hush! Murmur softly! Speak not so harshly to me! In my ebolution I have wandered from the object of my intent. Richard, your friends had better call those bets off. This gentleman was introduced to you under the cognomen of Lyman. That's only the forward portion of his signature. His name is Lyman Hopper. Last November he won the amateur pool championship of Cincinnati, O-he-ho. On January fourth he met and played Joe Bodge, the professional champion of Chicago. They played for a purse, and Bodge lost. This, you will understand, makes Mr.

Hopper a full-fledged professional. Now you realize what you're up against."

Bob Singleton had restrained Arlington, who was fiercely snarling with rage as Wiley made this announcement. At this point Chet ducked under the big fellow's arm, his cane whistled through the air, and he struck the sailor a stinging blow across the shoulders. He was about to follow it up with another blow on the face when Merriwell leaped in, snatched the cane away, snapped it in two, and flung it on a billiard table.

"Thanks, Richard," said the marine marvel, hunching his shoulders and making a wry face. "My agitated friend seems to have lost control of his temper."

"Curse you for a blabbing, loud-mouthed fool!" cried Chet, seeking to reach Wiley with his hands.

"Stand aside, Richard," urged the wind-jammer. "Let him glide into me. Have no fear that a rancorous youth with a game ankle can put little Walter to the mat."

"You can't fight here in these rooms," said Dick. "If Arlington persists, he'll be put out."

Lyman now reached Chester, grasped his shoulder, and spoke hurriedly in his ear.

"All right," grated Chet regretfully; "but I'll fix him yet! I won't touch him again—not here. There's plenty of time."

"That's right, Chesty," nodded the captain; "there's months, and years, and centuries of time."

"Give me back the money I loaned you, you ungrateful cur!" demanded Chet. "Our agreement is off."

"Why so hasty, Chesty—why so sudden? When you loaned me that insignificant sum you told me I might be all summer in repaying you, if I chose. If you get too insistent and brash, I may be even longer. So you have canceled our contract? Such a kind act

on your part fills me with inexpressible gratitude. I can't afford to travel in the society of a youth who would besmirch my snowy record. I shall turn with relief to my first love, Richard Merriwell. You're out of it, Chesty. No Pineville for you. No baseball in the Blue Hills this summer, my turtle dove."

"We'll see about that!" growled Arlington.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

AN UPHILL FIGHT.

"I presume those innocent young lambs will wish to withdraw their bets now!" sneered Lyman Hopper.

"Oh, yes, they'll squeal!" cried Arlington.

"Not hon your life!" burst from Billy Bradley. "Hi suppose you think you've won? Professional or no professional, I'll stick by my bet, by Jove!"

To the surprise of Arlington, the others stood with Bradley, and Chester was more than satisfied.

"You might as well give up now," he asserted.

"We'll wait until the game is over," rumbled Singleton.

Hopper examined the balls to make sure they were properly "frozen," then named one of the corner balls for a bank into the pocket at the head of the table. With perfect self-assurance, he made his play, and the ball named rebounded from the lower cushion, came rolling up the table, and dropped into the pocket.

Chester laughed loudly.

"It's too easy, Hopper, old chap," he said. "Don't run fifty straight."

"If 'e does, I'll eat my 'at!" muttered Bradley.

The pool sharp picked off four more balls and then missed a most difficult shot.

He had made nineteen points.

Not only that, but he had left the balls so Dick found it impossible to discover a regular shot or study out a combination. This being the condition, he called a safety and played the cue ball far up the table.

After looking the balls over, the expert decided on a safety. Although he grazed the balls gently and

brought the cue ball back up the table, he changed their positions slightly, and Merriwell fancied he saw a combination.

Dick decided to take a chance.

He called the combination and played for it.

The ball named was driven into the proper pocket, but when the balls broke one of them kissed the cue ball into another pocket, and this left the Fardale boy one point worse off than before. Not only that, but it gave his opponent another opening, and Hopper ran seven. Four balls were left on the table when Dick got at them.

"The game's all over now," said Arlington. "Why, Hopper has twenty-six, and Merriwell is one to the bad. You may as well give it up, Merriwell, old man. You're more than trimmed to-day—you're buried!"

"I never have given up a game until it was over," said Dick.

"What can you do? You haven't a shot now."

"I don't seem to have, but I'll try to double fourteen for the lower left-hand corner."

"You couldn't make it in a thousand years!"

"Possibly not."

It was Dick's only chance for a shot, and he placed himself on his nerve when he tried for it. No one knew better than he that a person who doubts his own ability is doomed to failure. Therefore Dick willed himself to succeed. In his mind ere trying for the shot he saw the fourteen rebound from the cushion and cross into the corner pocket. He saw it miss the cue ball by less than two inches as the latter returned from the lower cushion. He saw the cue ball strike the two object balls at the opposite side of the table and separate them, which would be sure to give him another shot.

Everything happened exactly as Dick had intended

it should. He struck the fourteen perfectly, and the cue ball came back swift enough to get past the object ball and let it cross. The fourteen dropped into the proper pocket, and the cue ball struck the two at the left-hand side of the table.

"Rather clever," commented Hopper, as Dick's friends applauded.

"Oh, accidents will happen," said Arlington. "He won't do much now."

Dick picked off three of the balls, but missed a hard bank shot on the last one.

"That gives you two points, Merriwell," said Hopper, as the ball owed by Dick was placed on the spot.

Then Hopper picked off the last two, and the boy racked the fifteen.

"You're dodging these breaks, Merriwell," observed the professional.

"Not intentionally," laughed Dick.

Once more Hopper named the corner ball for a bank into one of the head pockets.

This time, however, the ball came up the table and touched the side cushion just enough to deflect it so that it lodged in front of the pocket and did not fall into it.

"'Ooray!" cried Billy Bradley. "'E can't do it hevery time!"

"Go after them now, Dick!"

"That's right, Hopper, give him a show," said Arlington. "It won't amount to anything."

Instead of taking the ball that lay in the mouth of the pocket, Dick discovered an easy combination bank shot and drove one across the table into the side pocket. This broke the balls up, and Hal Darrell exclaimed:

"Go after them now, Dick!"

Hopper chalked his cue and sat down with a languid, indifferent air.

There were many things young Merriwell could do better than play pool. He had not given much time to the game, yet on several occasions he had received instructions from his brother Frank, who was a most proficient amateur player. These instructions proved to be of great benefit to him now. He played carefully, yet without timidness, for confidence is something absolutely necessary in a good pool player. Although he knew that, pitted against a professional, the chances were against him, he was there to do his best regardless of the result. Defeat would be no disgrace, but he longed for victory. The fact that Arlington had attempted to make money off the boys in such a contemptible manner increased young Merriwell's eagerness for victory.

He picked off eight balls and then missed a hard shot.

"Ten to twenty-six," said Chester. "Well, I fancy, that's about all you'll get this game, Merriwell."

Hopper rose and looked the balls over. One shot was very easy, but he saw it would not leave him in good position for anything further if he took it. Therefore he chose a more difficult shot—and missed.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Chet. "That's all right, Hopper, let him have a few more—if he can get 'em."

"Don't chortle too soon, Chesty," advised Cap'n Wiley. "Methinks I have a feeling. Methinks Richard the Great is going to give our friend, the sharp, a run for it."

Dick now made six points, but failed on the last ball remaining on the table.

"I see you're going to continue to let me do all the breaking," said Hopper, as he picked this ball off.

When the balls were racked again, instead of calling

a shot, the professional played safe. Dick followed with a safety, and Hopper returned the compliment, leaving the cue ball far from the bunch.

Merriwell looked them over closely and discovered a possible combination, which he tried for. Nevertheless, he had not counted on a kiss, which spoiled his shot.

"Twenty-nine to sixteen," announced Chester. "Run it out now, Hopper. You may as well end the agony."

Not until forty-two buttons were pushed up for him did Hopper fail.

"Well, give him a couple more—if he can get 'em," chuckled Chester.

Dick got them.

It was now his turn to break.

Making sure they were solidly set, Merriwell called the head ball for the side pocket.

"What? what?" shouted Arlington, in derision. "Whoever heard of such a thing? You can't live long enough to make it!"

Nevertheless, Dick struck the second ball on the side of the triangle in such a way that the head ball was kissed off and sent across the table to roll gently into the side pocket.

Arlington threw up his hands and dropped on a chair.

"What do you think of that, Hopper?" he demanded.

"That's nothing," answered the professional. "It's one of those fool breaks that can be made once in fifty times."

Dick had the balls well scattered, and he went after them while his friends looked on in breathless excitement.

"Will some one kindly hold me to keep me from exploding!" murmured Cap'n Wiley. "Why, this is the

real Simon Poor article, after all. This is no skinch for our friend, the sharp."

For the first time Lyman began to cast off his languid air and watch with a show of interest. He saw Merriwell run eleven balls with perfect ease and then pause. There were two shots to be considered. If Dick tried for one of them and missed, he would leave things easy for his opponent. If he tried the other and missed, there was a chance that he would leave Hopper in a difficult position. He had no intention of missing if he could help it, but he chose the latter shot.

He did miss by a hair.

As he had figured, the cue ball stopped in such a position that Hopper had no alternative but to try for a bank the length of the table.

"You've done pretty well, Merriwell," said Chester. "I didn't think it was in you."

The expert chalked his cue and named the bank shot.

Although he sought to conceal it, he was irritated by the success of this boy who had played with such coolness and judgment, and this irritation caused him to miss.

Cap'n Wiley did a sailor's hornpipe round the table.

"Why, it's a juicy old game, after all!" he cried. "Come, now, Richard of the Lion Heart, gather a few more eggs into those nests."

Dick clipped off the four remaining balls.

This gave him thirty-three points and left him ten behind his antagonist.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A NERVY FINISH.

"Try that great break of yours again, boy," urged Hopper.

Merriwell smiled at him.

"I don't have to," he said. "The game isn't difficult enough for me to take the chances now."

"Oh, is that so?" exclaimed the professional. "You don't think the game difficult, eh? Well, I like that!"

"I'm glad you like it," said Dick. "I'll play safe."

This was wise on his part, for his opponent had only eight points to make. Should Dick break the balls and fail, there was every chance that Hopper would run out.

Dick's break left one ball clear of the others and gave Hopper an open shot at it.

The sharp clipped it off easily, trying for a break at the same time. The cue ball came back from the cushion and struck the others, but, to the dismay of the professional, it did not break them up much and left him without a decent shot to try for.

"Well, I think I'll give you a little work now," he said, as he played a soft safety.

The cue ball returned from the cushion and "froze" to the cluster.

"The ball is frozen," said Dick.

"All right," nodded Hopper.

Young Merriwell called a safety, played the ball to the cushion, and brought it back into exactly the same position.

"Very foxy!" commented the professional, with a slight sneer. "I'll give you a longer shot."

He played to the cushion at an angle, and the ball

caromed up the table. Nevertheless, it went farther over to the left-hand side than Hopper had intended it should.

Merriwell spent fully two minutes in studying the positions of the balls in the cluster.

"I believe number four should go into the right-hand corner," he said. "I'll play the shot."

"The game's all over!" cried Arlington.

Chester was confident Dick would fail, and he believed Hopper, having the advantage of the break made by the boy, would then run off the points he needed.

Crash! Dick smashed into the balls.

Number four shot straight into the corner pocket.

Cap'n Wiley turned a back handspring.

"Talk about your playing!" he whooped. "What's the matter with that?"

"Shut up!" "Keep still!" cautioned the boys, nearly all of whom were quivering with the excitement and suspense. "Don't rattle Dick now!"

Young Merriwell went about his task with the utmost deliberation and coolness. At intervals Arlington made a remark intended to worry Dick, but apparently Merriwell was stone-deaf.

The languidness and unconcern had wholly left Hopper's face as Merriwell picked off ball after ball until he had secured nine and needed only one more to tie. In truth, as Cap'n Wiley chuckingly observed in Buckhart's ear, the professional "looked glum around the gills."

Dick stopped to chalk his cue. While doing so, his eyes surveyed the balls that lay on the table.

A moment later he made a clever bank shot, taking two cushions and securing the ball.

Hopper was tied.

Four balls remained, and Dick gathered them in.

Dick now had the lead, but it was necessary for him to break.

"You fooled too long, Hopper," said Chester.

At this Wiley and the boys broke into derisive laughter.

The sharp shrugged his shoulders.

"The game isn't over," he said. "He needs three more. Let's see him get them."

"Oh, that's easy," said Chet, with a wink. "He'll break them now and run them right off."

But Dick had no intention of breaking the balls. Instead of doing so, he played a safety and brought the cue ball back close to the head cushion at the right-hand corner.

Not only that, but he was fortunate or skillful enough to leave the object balls in a position that made it impossible for Hopper to figure out a shot.

The professional swore softly to himself.

"I'm ready to weep!" whispered Ted Smart. "If Dick wins, it will be an awful disappointment to me!"

After walking round the table a number of times and frowning over the balls, Hopper was forced to play safe.

Had his opponent been a professional like himself, it is possible the man's nerve would have remained undisturbed. His dismay over the astonishing showing made by this boy, however, caused him to miscalculate the slightest fraction of an inch, and his safety turned out to be anything but a safety. Two balls were detached from the group, and one of them rolled into perfect position for a long shot by Dick.

Arlington ground his teeth and cursed inwardly.

Taking plenty of time, young Merriwell made the shot. He had calculated well on the position of the cue ball, for, following this, he found himself ready to take the other detached object ball.

At this point he was forced to decide on his style of play. If he picked this lone ball off without attempting to break the bunch, there was no chance to make another and win the game right there. He would be compelled to play safe. And, like Hopper, his safety might turn out to be very unsafe.

He chalked his cue carefully and prepared to shoot.

Naming the ball, he drove it into the pocket and at the same time caused the cue ball to carom against the bunch.

At this moment there was a great racket outside in the street, and several of the boys rushed to the window.

"A runaway! a runaway!" they cried.

Dick hurried to a window and looked out.

An unhitched horse, standing in front of one of the village stores, had started to run away. The boys watched until the animal, drawing a careening wagon behind it, disappeared down the street.

Merriwell walked back to the table and looked at the balls. In a twinkling he discovered that at least two of them had been moved.

Chester Arlington had lingered just long enough to move these two balls in such a manner that no open shot was left for Dick.

"There's been shenannigans here!" cried Wiley. "Those balls have been moved!"

"Who moved them?" demanded Hopper savagely. "You don't want to accuse me! I won't let you off the way Arlington did!"

"I'm not prepared to state who did the vile deed," said the marine marvel, "but I know they've been moved."

"Oh, well, let them place the balls to suit themselves, Hopper," came hoarsely from Chet. "We'll call those bets off."

"We'll do nothing of the sort," came grimly from Dick. "I'll play the balls as they lie, although Wiley is right in saying they were moved."

Singleton lifted his hands in warning to repress a cheer from the boys.

Dick could see only one possible shot. This was a combination, and it was necessary for him to take two cushions in order to bring the ball into the side pocket.

"The eleven for that side," he said, motioning toward the pocket.

"What?" cried Arlington, again. "How you going to put the eleven into that side?"

"I'll show you," answered Dick.

He played the combination sharply, and the eleven ball shot up the board, struck the side cushion near the head of the table, caromed to the head cushion, came rolling down and softly dropped into the side pocket.

Dick had won!

CHAPTER L.

JUNE'S FAREWELL.

It was a balmy night in early June.

The sound of music and laughter echoed along one of the usually quiet streets of Fardale village.

Hundreds of Chinese lanterns made into arches and suspended from the trees in front of a cottage that sat well back from the street illuminated the grassy lawn and revealed a scene of innocent merriment and pleasure.

Doris Templeton's aunt was giving a lawn party for the girls of the Lakeside School and the boys of Fardale Academy.

On the broad veranda an orchestra was playing.

Near at hand a number of merry couples were dancing on the smooth lawn. In a bower beneath the trees others were enjoying refreshments.

Amid the happy throng there was one whose face wore a shadow.

It was June Arlington.

In vain her friends tried to cheer her. June smiled upon them, but there was sadness in her smile.

"It's because Dick isn't here," said Mamie Woodcliffe to Zona Desmond. "Where is he?"

"I don't know," answered Zona. "Isn't he with Doris?"

"No. Hal Darrell is with Doris. You know Hal and Doris have made it all up, and he's sticking to her so close that no other fellow has a chance. He actually monopolizes her."

"There's Dick, now!" exclaimed Zona, as young Merriwell was seen advancing toward them. "Where have you been, you truant?"

"I couldn't get here sooner," answered Dick. "You know I'm doing some hard plugging for the final exams. If I don't make good, I'll be hung up here in Fardale for another term."

"Well, you speak as if that would be a calamity," laughed Mamie. "Are we such terrible people here that you're anxious to get away?"

"Oh, far from it," he protested. "But, if I pass, it's Yale for me in the fall. Where's June?"

"She's been moping around all the evening," answered Zona. "For goodness' sake, cheer her up! I never saw her so blue. You ought to find her over in that direction somewhere."

Dick hurried away, and a few minutes later he was bowing before June, cap in hand.

Her face lighted up wonderfully as she saw him.

"Oh, I was afraid you wouldn't come!" she breathed. "I was afraid I wouldn't see you to-night, and I may never see you again."

The shadow that had rested on her face seemed to fall on his.

"Come with me, June," he urged. "I wish to talk with you."

They drew apart from the others and paused near a tree.

"What do you mean, June," asked Dick, "by saying you might never see me again if I had failed to come here to-night?"

"Why, haven't you heard, Dick?" she asked.

"I've heard a rumor that you are going to leave Lakeside School. I couldn't believe it. Tell me this report is not true, June!"

"I cannot," she answered, with something like a sob. "It's true, Dick. To-morrow I leave Fardale, never to return."

"Never to return?" he echoed huskily. "Where are you going?"

"Mother has taken me out of school here. She thinks perhaps she'll place me in a school at Wellsburg."

"Wellsburg? Why, that's near Bloomfield!"

"Yes, Dick."

"Well, then, I'll find my way to see you, June. You know I finish here this spring. My time to say farewell to old Fardale is close at hand. The thought fills me with dismay. The place is dear to me—how dear I cannot tell! 'Twas here I first met you, June!"

He took both her hands and held them as he looked straight into her eyes.

"That is the real reason why I love Fardale so much," murmured the girl. "It seems as if I were being banished from my home. I know you'll come back here sometimes, Dick, but I'll not be here."

"With you gone, Fardale can never seem the same," he earnestly declared.

"I pleaded with mother, but it was useless. Chester will enter Wellsburg Academy, and he has urged her to send me there."

"Then this is his work!" exclaimed Dick.

They were startled by a laugh, and Arlington himself stepped forth from behind the tree.

"Yes, it's my work, Merriwell," he declared. "I happened to stand near enough to hear you talking with my sister. I thought I'd give you a moment or two to bid her good-by. You say you'll find a way to see her at Wellsburg, eh? Well, perhaps you will, but I have my doubts about that. I'm going to watch her closely in the future. I know I'm hurting you, Merriwell, and I'm glad of it. You've triumphed over me many times, but in this I triumph. Say good-by to

her, and say it quick, for we leave to-night instead of to-morrow. Mother has sent me for her."

"Oh!" exclaimed June. And then her voice became choked.

"Come!" commanded Chester harshly. "Break away! We've got to hike for the hotel. I've had my bubble repaired, and we'll slide out of this rotten old town as soon as you can pack up."

Once more Dick grasped June's hand.

"Good-by!" he said.

"No! no!" she breathed, "not good-by—not that!"

"No, not that!" he exclaimed. "Adieu for a little while, June. Be sure I'll find you wherever you go! Not all the world can keep me from you!"

THE END.

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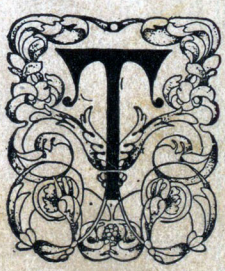

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